United Nations E/2008/SR.21

Economic and Social Council

Provisional

23 September 2008

Original: English

Substantive session of 2008

Provisional summary record of the 21st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 7 July 2008, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Mérorès ..... (Haiti)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Dialogue with the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions on the theme "The regional dimension of the themes of the high-level segment of 2008" (E/2008/15)

1. **The President** said that the dialogue with the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions would consider, from the regional perspective, the themes of the annual ministerial review on "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to sustainable development" and the thematic discussion on "Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development, taking into account current challenges".

2. **Mr. Sha** Zukang (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs), speaking in his capacity as Convener of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs, said that the perspectives of the regional commissions were important to the work of the United Nations because there was an essential policy link between the global debate on the issues mentioned by the President and the needs and priorities of specific regions. As the Secretary-General had noted in his report on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields (E/2008/15), the regional commissions were consulting with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs on better collaboration to serve the new functions of the Economic and Social Council, notably the annual ministerial reviews and the Development Cooperation Forum, including through regional meetings in preparation for the global events. The Department would do its best to further strengthen that collaboration and, during the coming year, would work with the World Health Organization and other relevant bodies to help the Council focus on the theme of the 2009 annual ministerial review: "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to global public health".

3. **Ms. Heyzer** (Executive Secretary, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)), making a slide presentation on the topic "Energy security and sustainable development in Asia-Pacific", said that with global oil prices at an all-time high of $140 per barrel, the Asia-Pacific region was caught between rising fossil fuel prices and the imperatives of climate change. It was urgent to shift towards a new energy paradigm; it was still possible to meet the urgent needs encapsulated in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) while protecting the natural environment and the climate for future generations.

4. Through rapid economic growth as a region-wide strategy, the Asia-Pacific region had risen as a global production centre. However, there had been insufficient reinvestment in order to improve the basic living standards of its people and the quality of its environment. The region had an ecological deficit: it occupied 40 per cent of the global land surface, its permanent crop land per capita was less than 80 per cent of the global average, its biologically productive area per capita was less than 60 per cent of that average, it had the lowest fresh water availability per capita of any region, its forest areas were decreasing and its spectacular economic growth over the past decade had been fuelled by an energy consumption rate that was 20 per cent greater than the world average for that period. Even in 2004 and 2005, when oil prices had risen, its energy demand had grown at double the world average, largely as a result of rapid economic expansion in East, North-East, South and South-West Asia. Consequently, energy prices had skyrocketed as demand outstripped supply.

5. Energy insecurity in the world's most populous region posed a serious economic, social, environmental and political threat to global sustainable development and achievement of the MDGs. Rising energy consumption to fuel rapid industrialization was linked with economic growth that minimized market costs and maximized profits. Because market prices did not fully reflect ecological costs, there was an ecological efficiency gap that could undermine the long-term sustainability of industrial development. Furthermore, rising energy prices linked to depreciation of the United States dollar, in which oil, gas and coal were traded, could lead to a recession; countries with special needs were the most vulnerable.

6. Energy security must also be safeguarded at the household level, since poor families were acutely vulnerable to price hikes. In the Asia-Pacific region, 1.7 billion people had no access to modern energy and were dependent on traditional biomass fuels such as kerosene, wood and dung. Girls and women were the hewers of wood and drawers of water to the detriment of their health, productivity and earning power. Thus, energy was key to the development of future generations. The prices of public transport and cooking

fuel had increased by 120 and 170 per cent, respectively and there was intense debate concerning the relationship between food and fuel prices and the net energy savings from biofuel production.

7. Rising emissions from energy consumption could accelerate climate change, including desertification, damage to water sources, forests and biodiversity, sea level changes and natural disasters. The resulting threat to human and animal health would be aggravated by population density.

8. Lastly, energy pricing was a politically sensitive issue, as seen from the protests sparked by sudden price hikes and subsidy withdrawals, and many countries' energy sectors suffered from weak governance and poor integration with other sustainable rural and urban development policies.

9. The region's growing and unsustainable dependence on fossil fuels made it vulnerable to high energy prices, damaged its economic growth prospects and increased its vulnerability to climate change. Fossil fuel consumption had been considered essential to economic growth, poverty reduction and addressing the problems set forth in the MDGs; however, that strategy might be undermining efforts to attain the development goals of growth, equity and inclusion.

10. The situation called for a paradigm shift to a virtuous cycle of sustainable energy through a greater reliance on renewable energy and energy efficiency improvement; and action to mitigate climate change. The intent was not to curtail energy consumption essential to growth, but only to discourage waste. High levels of growth could be achieved through more prudent use of energy by matching the different categories of use to the most appropriate, efficient supply options.

11. ESCAP proposed a six-pronged strategy for energy security and sustainable development. First, ecological costs should be internalized into energy price structures in order to stimulate energy efficiency innovation and investment in renewable energy. A fundamental tax reform was needed so that countries could maintain current levels of revenue by reducing income taxes and increasing energy taxes. Second, energy demand should be managed by focusing on production processes, recycling, reduction of energy-intensive materials, greater end-use appliance efficiency and lifestyle changes. That would entail new standards of efficiency, a combination of voluntary measures and regulation and a system of incentives and disincentives.

12. Third, investment in sustainable energy infrastructure should be promoted through fiscal and financial incentives and rationalization of energy price subsidies, and the commercial viability of investment in renewable energy should be improved by internalizing ecological costs into fossil fuel prices and investing in energy-efficient buildings and mass transit systems. Fourth, investment in research and development should be increased in order to encourage technology innovation and the development of renewable energy and power sources. Fifth, long-term competitiveness should be enhanced by adopting more energy-efficient technologies in order to reduce vulnerability to volatile energy prices. And, sixth, a long-term vision of distributed energy systems should be adopted in order to make renewable energy a large-scale replacement for conventional power generation and grids.

13. Projections to the year 2030, against a baseline scenario (which assumed a continuation of current trends without major change) showed that the aforementioned strategy could reduce overall energy demand by 11 per cent, increase the share of modern renewable energy in the overall energy mix from 9 per cent to 17 per cent, decrease carbon emissions by 55 per cent and reduce investment in energy infrastructure across the region from $9 trillion to $8.3 trillion.

14. ESCAP was committed to promoting regional cooperation for sustainable energy. An energy paradigm shift must be part of a broader shift from quantity to quality of growth, since energy was consumed as a means to meet larger economic, social and environmental needs; unless those needs were realigned, supply and consumption patterns could not change. All countries must pursue a common vision of a strategic regional cooperation framework for energy security that would benefit all; the strategy would fail if some countries were profligate while others were thrifty.

15. In the short to medium term, regional and subregional cooperation could promote energy security in the Asia-Pacific region in seven areas: multilateral dialogue among governments, the private sector, financial institutions and international organizations; long-term trade agreements on energy supply and

pricing between producer and consumer countries; building strategic energy reserves through coordinated stockpiling for emergency needs; transboundary energy projects for transporting fuel and transmitting electricity; technology transfer initiatives to accelerate renewable energy market expansion and energy efficiency improvement; a trans-Asian energy system, building on ongoing or planned subregional energy cooperation, which could be reviewed in order to balance grid investment against investment in renewable energy and pipelines and the future availability of oil and gas; and South-South cooperation in the sharing of knowledge on technologies and project-related resources.

16. With its region-specific knowledge, networks and ties with regional governments, ESCAP stood ready to pursue a programme that included policy studies, stakeholder consultations and policy dialogues, cooperation mechanisms and regional training programmes and pilot projects designed to test core concepts. In 2008, it had mandated its secretariat to promote renewable energy with a view to energy security and sustainable development in the region, focusing on technology transfer and capacity-building.

17. **Mr. Janneh** (Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)), making a slide presentation on the topic "Food security, sustainable development and the MDGs in Africa", said that, although agriculture was still the backbone of most African economies, its contribution to output and income growth and food security had stagnated or declined owing to underinvestment. The food situation remained a major concern, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Since 1990, the number of people who suffered from chronic hunger had increased by over 20 per cent; despite commercial food imports amounting to more than $25 billion per year, in addition to food aid of $2 billion per year, the problem affected over 50 per cent of the population in Central Africa, 41 per cent in Southern Africa and 38 per cent in East Africa. There were currently 39 World Food Programme (WFP) protracted relief and recovery operations in Africa, and food insecurity was worsening as a result of global food price inflation, erratic weather patterns and continuing conflicts. It was therefore unlikely that the continent would achieve the MDG goal of halving the number of people living in extreme poverty and hunger by 2015.

18. Food insecurity was driven by a number of factors. Agriculture in Africa had long been undercapitalized and was predominantly a subsistence activity. There was little use of fertilizers and modern seeds, low adoption of new technologies and declining productivity. Less than 6 per cent of arable land was under irrigation, compared with 40 per cent in Asia; fertilizer use in sub-Saharan Africa stood at 9 per cent of the world average; and its crop yields were less than half those of other developing regions. At the same time, the population was growing more rapidly than that of any other region; it had more than doubled between 1975 and 2005 and was expected to reach 1.1 billion by 2025. The urban population was growing at an average rate of 5 per cent and would more than double in size from 294 million in 2000 to 742 million by 2030. That change was fuelled in part by poverty-induced rural-to-urban migration that led to expansion of urban space and human settlement programmes at the cost of a reduction in agricultural land.

19. Urban population growth and improved income had increased the demand for high-value food commodities such as wheat, dairy and meat products and processed food, placing greater pressure on the supply system. Per capita food production had declined and the failure to develop a meaningful agro-processing industry and agribusiness sector had widened the gap between the growing demand for processed food and regional production and supply, mostly in the form of raw commodities.

20. Climate change was expected to exacerbate poverty and hunger on the continent. Although its impact would vary by region, virtually all agro-ecological zones in Africa would suffer reduced agricultural productivity as a result of global warming, decreased precipitation and the resulting soil degradation and dust storms. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) had projected that warming by an additional 0.4 degrees Celsius would shorten the crop-growing period by more than 20 per cent in the Sahel region as a whole and by more than 50 per cent in many African countries by 2020. Increased desertification would affect the northern part of the continent, resulting in serious water shortages and adverse consequences for the agriculture and forestry sectors. Wildlife and wetlands of international importance were also under threat in Southern Africa.

21. There were various policy options for remedial action. First, agriculture must be repositioned as a

central element of poverty reduction and growth strategies through sustainable modernization and rural transformation; bold action from African governments was needed in the areas of technology, infrastructure, institutions and policies. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) provided a coherent framework for investment in those areas with a view to extending the agricultural area under sustainable land management and reliable water control systems; building rural infrastructure and trade-related capacities; increasing food supply and reducing hunger through improved policies and social safety nets; and improving agricultural research, technology dissemination and adoption.

22. CAADP had been endorsed by all governments at the July 2003 African Union Summit in Maputo. They had agreed to adopt sound policies and committed themselves to allocating at least 10 per cent of national budgetary resources to agricultural and rural development by 2008. To date, however, only four countries had met that commitment. Domestic sources, both government and private sector, must be mobilized and support from development partners must be forthcoming. Policies and investments in agriculture and rural development should integrate climate change concerns systematically; agriculture was part of both the problem and the solution, since it both contributed to greenhouse gases and offered opportunities for carbon mitigation.

23. Second, limited access to energy and poor infrastructure, compounded by rising oil prices, made it difficult for African countries to trigger a meaningful agricultural revolution. Efforts should focus on designing and implementing energy access scale-up mechanisms using supply schemes that promoted the development of local entrepreneurship and the use of indigenous energy resources; enhancing institutions' bioenergy and resource development capacities with a view to poverty reduction, energy security and sustainable development; providing regional economic communities with resources and capacity-building for the harmonization of national policies in order to promote regional energy production and trade; and supporting the establishment of flexible, accelerated investment schemes for priority projects such as hydropower systems.

24. The objectives of the European Union-Africa Partnership on Infrastructure included reducing the cost and improving the quality of transport services by removing infrastructure and non-physical barriers to the free movement of goods and people, strengthening customs operations and improving maintenance of transport assets; developing sustainable uses of available water resources in order to meet basic needs and improving integrated water resource management at the local, river basin and catchment, national and transboundary levels; developing access to sustainable, affordable energy services for the economic and social sectors, improving policy frameworks and institutional capacity, and facilitating investments essential to cross-border interconnections, grid extension and rural distribution; and bridging the digital divide by providing access to affordable information and communication technology through support for regulatory reforms, capacity-building and the development of pan-African broadband infrastructure and non-commercial e-services linked to regional and national networks.

25. Third, the decline in agriculture's share in the World Bank portfolio, from 39 per cent in the 1970s to less than 10 per cent in 2000, must be reversed; official development assistance (ODA) flows to agriculture must be increased, focusing on the whole food supply chain; ODA from non-traditional sources, such as India and China, should give priority to food security; the European Union and the United States of America should deal expeditiously with the agricultural subsidies problem in their regions; major food exporters with export restrictions should lift them; development cooperation should support research and development in the field of African agriculture; and the Doha round of trade negotiations should be given a new lease on life.

26. In an increasingly global economy, the current fragmentation of Africa's food and agricultural system along subregional, national and subnational borders did not provide for economies of scale at, and of coordination among, all stages of the commodity chain or for complementary diversification and specialization among countries and subregional groupings that would increase the competitiveness and interregional trade potential of African agriculture. CAADP provided a framework for consensual policies and priorities for African governments, regional organizations, farmers, private agribusiness and development partners, but sustainable transformation would require promoting public-private partnerships in a regional integration

approach with a view to economies of scale and complementarity in resource endowments based on comparative and competitive advantages beyond national or regional economic commission boundaries.

27. Through its strategic partnership with the African Union and the African Development Bank (ADB), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) was providing technical support for efforts to establish an African common market for agricultural products. South-South cooperation was focusing on peer learning and experience-sharing on successful practices, policies and programmes worthy of imitation by other developing countries. The Food Security and Sustainable Development Division of ECA offered States an array of services, including raising policymakers' awareness of the urgent need to prioritize agricultural development and to integrate the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development into development planning. Several bilateral and multilateral initiatives focused on rural development in Africa, but it was not clear how they could be harmonized in order to reach the CAADP goal of 6 per cent annual growth in gross domestic product (GDP) in the area of agriculture.

28. For that reason, ECA had consistently advocated the federation and articulation of investment in the CAADP pillars, within a framework of greater regional integration, focusing on systematic development of the value chains of strategically important food and agricultural commodities. It worked in partnership with the African Union Commission, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and, together with the African Union and ADB, was championing a policy framework for strengthening land rights and enhancing both productivity and natural resource management, including by developing benchmarks and indicators on land reform.

29. ECA was in the process of establishing the African Climate Policy Centre (ACPC) in order to help African countries mainstream climate change concerns into their development policies and framework. Through analytical work, advocacy, capacity-building, technical assistance, knowledge-sharing and peer learning, the Centre would help deliver on the policy component of the Climate Information for Development Needs (ClimDev-Africa) programme, which ECA had initiated in partnership with the African Union Commission, ADB and the Global Climate Observing System (CGOS), with a view to improved climate-related observations and data, information services and risk management practices for climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture, energy, water resources, health and infrastructure.

30. In conclusion, he called for urgent action to improve food security in Africa in a manner consistent with the objectives of sustainable development as articulated in the outcome statements of the relevant international conferences. Development cooperation was important, but African leadership was crucial. Malawi was an example of success in that area: through determination and appropriate policies and with support from the international community, it had become essentially food self-sufficient.

31. **Mr. Belka** (Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)), making a slide presentation on the topic "Energy efficiency's contribution to reducing world poverty: The role of the regional commissions", said that the world's energy use was likely to double by 2045. Although energy consumption per unit GDP had decreased by 1.3 per cent annually between 1980 and 2006, that decline had been essentially cancelled out by the growth in the world's population. Over 80 per cent of energy was produced from carbon-dioxide-producing fossil fuels and without a major policy or technological change, that situation was unlikely to improve in the next 25 years. Economists and social scientists agreed that the damage was greatest in the countries closest to the equator and that the poorest populations, who were the least able to adapt with irrigation and increased fertilizer use, were the most affected. Agricultural subsistence farmers, who were in the majority in some of the least developed countries, would be the greatest sufferers. Disputes over scarce water resources and worsening poverty would fuel intra- and inter-State conflicts, leading to increased out-migration and the rapid spread of diseases.

32. It had been estimated that an increase in global temperature of 2.5 degrees centigrade would result in an annual GDP loss that would vary by country and by region. Some high-income countries might even benefit from increased global temperatures and the impact on transition economies such as China would be neutral, but low-income countries such as India and the African States would be severely affected.

33. The response to global warming should focus on identifying alternatives to fossil fuels; switching to fossil fuels that produced fewer carbon dioxide emissions and to carbon capture and sequestration; increased energy efficiency; and adaptation to climate change, which would prove to be the most difficult for the poorest countries and would be more costly than mitigation.

34. Noting that energy efficiency varied tremendously between countries, he compared the consumption of oil per $1 of GDP with per capita income. If all countries reached the average for their per capita income characteristics, total energy savings would be close to 20 per cent, if they reached the energy-efficient frontier, savings would increase to 42 per cent of current consumption. Globally, there was an enormous potential for energy savings. In a comparative analysis of the various methods of reducing carbon dioxide emissions, building insulation and sugar cane biofuel ranked among the most efficient sources of energy, actually with negative costs involved. Indeed, sugar cane biofuel did not produce food shortages. On the other hand, biodiesel and industrial carbon capture and storage (CCS) were the least efficient methods of reducing emissions.

35. ECE promoted policy dialogue and information exchange with respect to energy efficiency and tried to set good examples through its projects. The fact that market economies were twice as efficient as economies in transition, in terms of energy use, had led to the recognition that the sharing of technology, expertise and experience should be encouraged. In 1991 an Energy Efficiency Programme had been established to provide technical cooperation and financing to 24 ECE countries, some of which were now reducing carbon dioxide emissions by the equivalent of 68,000 automobiles a year. The current Energy Efficiency 21 project was being implemented at a cost of $10.5 million, and was aimed at identifying and developing investment projects, stimulating discussion on policy reform and financing energy efficient investments that were managed by private sector specialists. Since energy efficiency projects outside the European Union were often perceived by the private sector as being high-risk, a joint public-private equity investment fund, with assets of approximately $2 billion, was established for projects in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. The Russian Federation had also expressed interest in such projects. ECE had recently received a grant to help expand the energy efficiency project to other regional commissions, which would create a network of regional hubs of information and capacity-building.

36. **Ms. Bárcena** (Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean), speaking on the socio-economic and environmental impact of soaring food and oil prices, said that since 2006, the average cost of food and energy had increased by 67.8 per cent, and 40 per cent respectively. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the price index for food had risen faster than the general consumer price index. Country disaggregated statistics had shown that countries that were both net importers of food and oil producers had experienced a rate of food inflation that surpassed the general rate of inflation.

37. The structural and temporary sources of the problem could be traced to financial volatility and a slowdown in global growth; a surge in inflation rates; increased world demand generated by Asia; and supply shocks, arising from the decision of some countries to concentrate on supplying their domestic markets rather than on exports. Other contributing factors included the hike in the price of oil, oil-based agrochemicals and other inputs, increased demand for biofuels, and the effect of agricultural subsidies paid to United States and European producers. Speculative purchases on futures markets had also played a key role in generating the food crisis.

38. Extreme weather conditions in the major food-producing regions of Europe and Australia, combined with frost and unusually hot conditions in the Western hemisphere, had been partially responsible for poor yields in maize, wheat and oats in recent years.

39. Regarding biofuel, she said that a distinction should be drawn between the production of ethanol from maize — a rising trend in the United States of America — and from sugar cane in Latin America and the Caribbean. While it might be true that the production of ethanol from maize competed with food cultivation in the United States of America, that was not at all the case in Latin America and the Caribbean. In general, in the medium and long terms, other forms of energy would inevitably replace oil production, and States must be prepared to quickly adapt to the changes ahead through their approach to innovations, technology and investment. As a group, the countries

of the region were net exporters of food, but many of them were facing crucial problems, including undernourishment.

40. In mitigating the economic consequence of the global crisis, namely inflation, States had very few tools at their disposal. Central banks worldwide were carefully considering their response to inflation and were taking different approaches to the problem. There was no doubt that rising food and oil prices would cause consumption to contract, particularly among groups that had a low capacity for savings.

41. Even though the region had managed to reduce extreme poverty from 44 per cent in 2002 to 35 per cent in 2007, the latter figure still represented 194 million persons. It was predicted that the regressive impact of income distribution and the escalating price of staples, which had risen on average by 16 per cent, would cause extreme poverty to grow more than 3 percentage points if no active public policy was adopted. If governments took action, by raising the income of the poor by 0.5 per cent, poverty would rise, at best, by 2 points, a level that was still considered rather high.

42. With regard to the impact on sustainable development and the environment, there was likely to be even more pressure to put native forests into agricultural production, as land was increasingly sought for cultivation. In that context, there had been some discussion about the possibility for States to set vast tracts of land aside as agricultural reserves for food production. There were already signs that pollution by agrochemicals and pressure on already stressed watersheds had begun to take their toll. Similarly, the mix of conditions that could be regarded as climate change drivers, such as deforestation, soil erosion and methane, had increased significantly. The vulnerable centres from which food crops originated therefore needed to be protected.

43. The region was somewhat prepared for the current crisis because anti-cyclical macroeconomic policies had been adopted and reserves had been built up during the period of growth although it was still vulnerable in some areas, particularly in Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean. Household incomes had shrunk as a direct and indirect result of the slowdown in the United States economy. In the short term, countries should adopt measures to buffer food price increases in domestic markets and to improve income; in the long term, they should adopt policies to sustainably increase supply and productivity. Investment in research and development, climate change mitigation and the strengthening of extension services were of paramount importance.

44. **Mr. AlDafa** (Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)), in presenting an overview of the energy sector in Western Asia, said that most countries of the region had significant energy resources, with oil and gas accounting for 56 and 30 per cent, respectively, of world reserves. The region also enjoyed large solar and wind biomass reserves. In 2006, the main energy production was approximately 34 million barrels of oil a day. Installed electricity generation capacity was dominated by thermal power generation.

45. There were wide disparities in the levels of energy consumption, but between 2002 and 2006 the average growth rate was 5.6 per cent. The transport sector was the main consumer of natural gas and petroleum products, and the biggest consumers of electricity were the residential and industrial sectors. In spite of the region's overall wealth in energy resources, around 10 per cent of the population did not have access to energy services. An additional 15 per cent in rural or urban poor areas were highly underserved; consequently, increased accessibility was an issue of great priority.

46. Since the adoption of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, States of the region had made concerted efforts to achieve sustainability in the energy sector through the adoption of policies and codes of practice, energy audits and the implementation of relevant field projects. There had so far been limited use of renewable energy, but renewable energy electricity plants and wind farms were active, and there were plans to set up more of them throughout the region and to establish research centres. Furthermore, a full-scale renewable energy community had been created, within the framework of which, a number of States had set targets of generating up to 20 per cent electricity from renewable sources by the year 2020.

47. The countries of the region had increased the share of natural gas in their overall energy consumption mix to 42 per cent. In that regard, he described new ventures undertaken by various States to ensure a cleaner and more efficient use of fuels, and to

expand electricity grid coverage and the current network of pipelines.

48. ESCWA had supported Member States in improving their energy sector sustainability by facilitating and promoting policy formulation, strengthening regional cooperation and enhancing their capacities in areas such as energy efficiency, renewable energy and cleaner fuels. Though the ESCWA region did not contribute significantly to global warming, it would be disproportionately affected by climate change, and, in 2007, member countries had expressed their commitment to take action on mitigation and adaptation measures by adopting the Arab Ministerial Declaration on Climate Change. Energy production and consumption were the main sources of CO_2 emissions in the region.

49. ESCWA would continue to provide support to member countries in integrating climate change into their national sustainable energy strategies. Among other upcoming activities, it planned to assess the effects of climate change on economic and social development in the region and to prepare an Arab framework action plan on climate change, in partnership with other regional bodies and United Nations agencies.

50. **Mr. Kebret** (Observer for Ethiopia), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that he agreed with the Executive Secretary of ECA on the importance of long-term investment in agriculture and infrastructure. That investment should not just be in the form of financial support but should also consist of other inputs such as improved seeds, microcredit, market access and transfers of technology to help small-scale farmers increase their production and sell it outside their national markets.

51. He welcomed the establishment of five subregional offices by ECA and wanted to know whether there was any coordination between those offices and the regional economic communities. Given the growing importance of the regional economic communities in Africa, particularly in terms of building closer regional integration, he wondered whether any special steps had been taken to strengthen them. He also asked what progress had been made in terms of strengthening ECA itself in the areas of finance and human resources, especially as regards implementing best practices from other offices. Noting that carbon finance was an engine for greater employment, he asked how the concept could be disseminated in other countries, particularly developing countries. In his view, the West Asian countries could share their experience in that area with other regional organizations.

52. **Mr. Ali** (Malaysia) asked the Executive Secretary of ESCAP whether, in her assessment, countries were ready to change their lifestyles to achieve a paradigm shift. He also noted that some regional commissions, such as ECE, had more experience in the management of carbon emissions. Noting that it would be pointless to duplicate efforts, he said that there was room to exploit synergies between the different regional organizations.

53. **Mr. Sul** Kyung-hoon (Republic of Korea), noting that many other United Nations operational agencies were involved in the area of sustainable development, which gave rise to possible duplication of efforts, wondered whether regional-level strategies were in fact required in that area and what coordination mechanisms existed within each regional commission to ensure an effective strategy. He would also like to know what projects the regional commissions were implementing to enhance private sector participation. He asked the Executive Secretary of ECLAC whether the Commission had any statistical data to prove that biofuel production from sugar cane would not adversely affect the amount of arable land available for food production.

54. **Ms. Viotti** (Brazil) said that her country recognized many of the public policy challenges set out in the presentation by the Executive Secretary of ECLAC. She was pleased to note that the Executive Secretary saw investment in research and development for efficient and sustainable food and biofuel production as a priority and asked whether she had any other thoughts on how to proceed in that area. Responding to the question by the representative of the Republic of Korea, she commented that increases in biofuel production in Brazil had occurred alongside increases in food production and had been achieved mainly through productivity gains. Biofuels accounted for a very small proportion of total arable land, and so even if production was expanded it would not compete with food production.

55. **Mr. St. Aimee** (Saint Lucia) said that he agreed with most of the public policy dialogue, especially in relation to extension services. The regional

commissions were not, however, paying sufficient attention to water resources management, which was a unifying component in sustainable development, since water was both an input in agriculture and a potential source for energy development, as well as being affected by climate change. On the question of interaction between the various regional commissions, he believed such collaboration would be particularly fruitful between ECLAC and ESCAP, owing to similarities in the size of their member countries. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) had an important role to play, since the food crisis in some cases required a focus on food distribution and transformation, rather than food production.

56. **Mr. Loizaga** (Paraguay) said that, as a net food exporter, his country played a key role in food security, while as a net energy importer and a landlocked country, it found it particularly difficult to get to sources of energy for development. There was therefore a need to find new energy alternatives. The cultivation of sugar cane for ethanol production was a means of integrating disadvantaged segments of the rural population into the national economy and, given the relatively small proportion of land used for biofuel production, he did not think that biofuel production contributed to food shortages. Paraguay, in its capacity as Vice-Chairman of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, welcomed the support given by the regional commissions ahead of the midterm review in October 2008 and stressed the need for developing landlocked countries, small island States and least developed countries to be given priority consideration.

57. **Mr. Janneh** (Executive Secretary, ECA) said that the points made by the observer for Ethiopia regarding agriculture and infrastructure were already reflected in various national programmes. ECA also fully accepted the importance of coordination with the regional economic communities. The subregional offices and regional economic communities worked very closely together and, where they were not co-located, liaison officers were placed in the regional economic communities to emphasize the closeness of the relationship with them. The strengthening of ECA itself was an ongoing process. Indeed, the Commission had repositioned itself on two main strategic pillars: to support the African agenda for integration and help Africa to move forward on the MDGs agenda. As well as receiving support from the United Nations itself, it benefited from a number of bilateral and multilateral partnerships and was planning to mobilize additional resources of $100 billion for its 2007-2009 business plan. He fully accepted the point made about carbon finance, indicating that the regional commissions were collaborating on that issue.

58. In response to the point made by the representative of the Republic of Korea about coordination and possible duplication, he said that the regional commissions were working closely together, holding several joint meetings a year, and were seeking to build a common knowledge platform to share best practices. As for private sector participation, there was now continuous consultation between the private and public sectors, with most countries realizing that the private sector was the engine of growth and development, and ECA itself had a private sector division.

59. **Ms. Heyzer** (Executive Secretary, ESCAP), on the issue of whether countries were ready for a paradigm shift, said that the development of a sustainable energy framework was now not just desirable but essential. The question was how to develop the vision of a lower carbon economy without sacrificing economic growth, since the population of the Asia and Pacific region included 640 million of the world's poorest people who still needed to share in the benefits of growth. With regard to knowledge sharing, ESCAP acted as a knowledge hub, bringing together expertise and serving as a platform for dialogue to provide policy options, as well as supporting members in terms of policy action. With regard to the question from the representative of the Republic of Korea on public sector participation, the private sector was now very active. A recent example was the Asian Business Forum that had brought together private sector companies to look at market-driven technology innovation as well as technology transfer, with a focus on energy security. Duplication had been greatly reduced and the commissions together could now be described as a pillar for South-South cooperation, acting as a conduit for the exchange of best practices between regions. The regional coordination mechanisms also existed to bring together the work of all United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies at regional and subregional level, in order to provide policy coherence and coordinated technical support.

60. **Ms. Bárcena** (Executive Secretary, ECLAC) said, with reference to duplication, that ECLAC was working very closely with FAO and WFP, and there were also major opportunities for it to liaise with other regional agencies, as well as with the World Bank and regional banks. In that connection, and in response to the question on research and development raised by the representative of Brazil, she noted that the issue of financial opportunities for research and development should be raised at the Doha Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development, since, while financing for development certainly had some benefits, research and development was also very important, particularly in Latin America, where investment in that area was currently very low. As for policy dialogue with the private sector, one of the major steps taken by ECLAC in recent years was to establish public/private partnerships analysing relevant experience from other countries, which was very useful for public policy. On the question of biofuels, she said that ECLAC was developing productivity maps to establish how much arable land was being used to grow a given crop in each country. The cultivation of sugar cane in the region was nothing new and its use in biofuel production had resulted from a sharp fall in the sugar market in the 1980s. On the joint work of the regional commissions, it was important to understand what the conduits for exchanges of experience between the different regions were. In that respect, ECLAC interacted with global institutions, bringing its own regional realities to the discussions, and also with the various sectors, including the financial sector.

61. **Mr. Nebenzya** (Russian Federation) said that the Russian Federation had consistently advocated strengthening the role of the regional economic commissions, particularly ECE and ESCAP, which were effectively the only universal representative bodies for socio-economic cooperation and integration in their respective regions. Bearing in mind that the sixty-fourth session of ESCAP recently held in Bangkok had confirmed a new structure for the activities of the Commission, the management of ESCAP should focus its efforts on those programmes that would produce real dividends for member States, especially with respect to transport, environmental protection and energy.

62. The Russian Federation, which cooperated actively with the regional economic commissions, would jointly organize with ECE and ESCAP the Governing Council of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) on 20 October 2008, as well as a SPECA economic forum on investment.

63. Despite the striking differences seen in regional development around the globe, all the regional economic commissions without exception should continue to focus on levelling the playing field for capacity development. In that respect, the real needs of the regional economic commissions should be sufficiently and fairly taken into account when building their future human and financial resource capacities. Notwithstanding the relatively high level of development of the Pan-European region as a whole, ECE should continue its productive and vital work to provide direct technical assistance to countries in need, primarily in Central Asia, Transcaucasia and South-East Europe.

64. In recent years, the regional dimension of the socio-economic work of the United Nations had increased the role of all its regional commissions, particularly ECA. Achieving the goals laid down in the ECA strategic framework for 2010-2011 would not only foster economic growth and prosperity for the entire African region, but also create conditions for the region to become fully integrated into the international economy.

65. **Mr. Meñez** (Philippines) said it was clear from all the presentations that the major issue was to find a sustainable development model that would promote growth without increasing food or energy prices, adversely affecting the environment or aggravating the effects of climate change. The lack of focused and sustainable investment in agriculture was one of the factors that contributed to the rise in food prices. That was important to countries such as the Philippines that had decided to become self-reliant in terms of food supply. He asked whether any analysis had been performed of the impact of investment on commercial agriculture. With regard to biofuels, the decision to produce a certain agricultural product did not depend solely on whether there was arable land available, but also on other factors, such as price: a farmer was fully at liberty to decide whether to grow crops for biofuel or crops for food, on the basis of the economic benefit that would accrue to him or her. He wondered whether the global price of sugar had reacted significantly to the increased acreage devoted to sugar cane for biofuel production. It was important that the regional

economic commissions, besides being repositories of knowledge, should work closely with individual countries within the region to try to produce tangible results with immediate impact. The commissions also had the role of transmitting knowledge from the global level to the national level.

66. **Mr. Matwang'a** (Observer for Kenya) pointed out that the underlying issue linking the food crisis and biofuels was land, which was the basic factor of production and was not in unlimited supply. It was necessary to find a way to make use of the land for such potentially beneficial initiatives as the production of biofuels without negatively affecting food production. He sought information on efforts being made for the regional economic commissions to interact with one another and share experience and best practices. Referring to the earlier statement that Africa, unlike other regions, was not likely to achieve the MDGs, he asked what Africa was not doing right, and what the African region could learn from the other regions. Pointing out that the motivations of the various stakeholders addressing the several crises were different, he said that there was therefore a need to develop guiding principles on the specific roles or expectations of each stakeholder in such endeavours.

67. **Ms. Handaruningrum** (Indonesia), noting that the role of the regional economic commissions was very important, suggested that they could play a significant part in developing a regional-level early warning system, which would assist in anticipating or even in preventing future food crises. Consideration had to be given to the modalities of operation of such a warning system, and paradoxically the food crisis, if managed properly, could bring profitable opportunities for small-scale farmers. Therefore, she emphasized the need to increase investment in the agricultural sector and to enhance cooperation between regional mechanisms. For instance, a mechanism could be developed to permit an exchange of views between farmers within a region, whose shared lessons learned could set directions for agricultural research.

68. **Ms. Williams** (Jamaica) said that the work of ECLAC should give special attention to food and energy security, given the far-reaching impact of high oil and food prices which threatened to reverse hard-earned gains. In recognition of the asymmetries among member States in the region, specifically between the Caribbean and Latin America, Jamaica urged the Commission to bear certain specificities in mind in implementing its work programme in the Caribbean, including creative industries, intellectual property, natural disasters, and regional integration and trade in terms of implementation of the CARICOM Single Market. Additional resources should be provided to strengthen the subregional office in Trinidad and Tobago, particularly in terms of personnel in the areas of climate change and information and communication technology.

69. **Mr. Fautua** (New Zealand) expressed agreement with the description by the Executive Secretary of ESCAP of the work that would be needed to develop a common vision and plan of action for the region, having seen how much effort had been required to do so for just one country, his own. He sought information on how ESCAP intended to address the competing challenges facing its members — ranging from a high demand for energy in some countries in northern Asia to very serious concerns over the threats and challenges of climate change — in the small island developing States in the Pacific.

70. **Mr. Gibbs** (Barbados) said that the Caribbean countries favoured increased investment in agriculture as a way of increasing food security. In that regard, it was vital to complete the Doha round. On the issue of climate change, Barbados also wished to bring into focus the vulnerabilities of small island developing States and the impact that climate change was having on important components of their economies, in particular agriculture and tourism.

71. **Mr. Abdalhalmeem** (Sudan) asked the Executive Secretaries of ECA and ESCWA to comment on the possibility of the two Commissions initiating cooperation on the basis of the comparative advantage of the two regions in order to ensure energy and food security.

72. **Ms. Aitimova** (Kazakhstan) wondered whether ESCAP still intended to establish a subregional office in Central Asia and whether the Executive Secretary of ECE could give an update on SPECA.

73. **Mr. Belka** (Executive Secretary, ECE) observed that "duplication" was a word much in vogue. It referred to a situation in which people tried to do things in rivalry and without coordination, not to one in which they did things jointly, which was different. Everything ECE did was done in partnerships. He gave several examples of activities and projects that ECE was undertaking in partnership with other bodies, both

governmental and private, including some outside the region. Consequently, he urged caution in speaking disparagingly of "duplication". With regard to SPECA, it now comprised six working groups, which worked with countries, NGOs and think tanks. Its next Governing Council meeting would be in Moscow in October.

74. **Mr. Ishize** (Japan) said that it was very important to maintain and enhance the flow of commodities including food and energy, taking into account the interdependence between the exporting and importing countries. Also, in addressing the food crisis and the energy crisis, it was important to consider not only the supply and demand sides, but also to make the best use of what was already present. For example, food could be lost or wasted during transportation, and much energy was also wasted. He asked what the regional economic commissions were doing to reduce such wastage. He suggested that "synergy of cooperation" might be a better term than "duplication". Japan considered cooperation among regions to be very important, and looked forward to fruitful discussions at the seminar on triangular cooperation to be organized by ESCAP later in the year.

75. **Mr. AlDafa** (Executive Secretary, ESCWA) agreed with the representative of the Sudan that there was a need for cooperation between ECA and ESCWA. Indeed, the current crisis in fuel and food prices called for closer cooperation and coordination not only among the regional economic commissions but within the international community as a whole.

76. **Ms. Heyzer** (Executive Secretary, ESCAP) said that, with ESCAP covering such a vast and diverse region, she was grateful to the member States for permitting a subregional approach. The establishment of subregional offices was very much part of that approach; specifically, ESCAP intended to establish one in Central Asia, jointly with ECE. In response to the comment from the representative of New Zealand, she noted that each subregion focused on a very different range of issues. In the small island countries of the Pacific, the issue of concern was not just connectivity but also that of coming together in a regional framework in order to increase efficiency, coordinate bulk purchases and lower prices. China's focus was very much on energy efficiency, India's was to be a catalyst for clean technology, and so on. She agreed with the representative of Japan that it was extremely important to make better use of what was already extant. As that idea applied to agriculture, the next agricultural revolution had to focus on post-harvest technologies, such as improved rice-milling techniques. ESCAP was working very closely with its Technology Innovation Centre to enlist technology transfer so as to mitigate post-harvest losses.

77. **Ms. Bárcena** (Executive Secretary, ECLAC) suggested that the Caribbean now had a tremendous opportunity in sugar. It had gone through a period of difficult market conditions, and indeed some Caribbean countries were now focusing on areas such as tourism, but the basis of the sugar industry was still present, and with the growth in sugar-based biofuels there could be exciting times ahead. The work of ECLAC in the Caribbean subregion would focus on two important areas: strengthening the office in Trinidad and Tobago and providing assistance with respect to natural disasters. The Caribbean was one of the areas most vulnerable to natural disasters, which had had devastating effects on countries' infrastructure and GDP. Also, as the representative of Saint Lucia had noted, water was going to be a critical element that would need to be considered along with food and oil in the future.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.

United Nations E/2008/SR.22

Economic and Social Council

Provisional

15 September 2008

Original: English

Substantive session of 2008
Coordination segment

Provisional summary record (partial)* of the 22nd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 7 July 2008, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Lima (Vice-President) ..... (Cape Verde)

Contents

The role of the United Nations system in implementing the ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the 2007 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council

* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting. A panel discussion was conducted.

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08-41226 (E)

In the absence of Mr. Mérorès (Haiti), Mr. Lima (Cape Verde), Vice-President, took the chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

The role of the United Nations system in implementing the Ministerial Declaration of the high-level segment of the 2007 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council (E/2008/21)

1. **The Vice-President**, opening the coordination segment, recalled that the Council, in its decision 2007/261, had decided to focus its attention during that segment on reviewing implementation of the ministerial declaration of the 2007 high-level segment, entitled "Strengthening efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger, including through the global partnership for development". The complex challenge of reducing poverty and hunger should be addressed from a broad perspective including rural and agricultural development, employment creation, enterprise development, sustainable development, science and technology, trade and financing for development as key elements of a comprehensive pro-poor development strategy for achieving Goal 1 of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.

2. The report of the Secretary-General contained in document E/2008/21 and the report of the Secretary-General on the role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, in light of General Assembly resolutions 50/227, 52/12 B, 57/270 B and 60/265, including resolution 61/16 (E/2008/77), provided a useful basis for discussion. The 2008 coordination segment gave the Council an opportunity to assess and provide guidance on the United Nations system approach to supporting the implementation of Goal 1.

3. There had been great progress in advancing system-wide coordination in the implementation of the United Nations development agenda based on the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs. However, a more comprehensive policy framework for follow-up to the various elements of the agenda was needed. To that end, the Council should identify ways to strengthen the link between the normative and policy work of its functional commissions and the programmatic and operational activities of the governing bodies of United Nations system organizations. The debate on that matter should take place in the broader context of the Council's new functions: the annual ministerial review and the Development Cooperation Forum.

4. **Mr. Stelzer** (Assistant-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the role of the United Nations system in implementing the Ministerial Declaration of the high-level segment of the 2007 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council (E/2008/21), said that the review of United Nations system support for implementation of the MDGs would make an important contribution to the high-level events taking place in the General Assembly in autumn 2008.

5. While recognizing the progress made at the intergovernmental level in recent years regarding the impact of different policy areas on eradicating poverty and hunger, the 2007 ministerial declaration had underscored the multidimensional nature of that problem. Its message was that those policy areas should be treated as integral to comprehensive, pro-poor national development strategies and as a framework for action for all development partners. As the eradication of poverty and hunger was the core objective of the United Nations development agenda, Goal 1 was at the centre not just of targeted United Nations system activities, but of a wider range of development activities.

6. To promote a unified response to the unfolding global food security crisis, the Secretary-General had established a High-Level Task Force which had developed a Comprehensive Framework for Action. The challenge was to implement the related measures and to identify short- and medium-term funding sources. Since the 2006 ministerial declaration on the theme "Creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development", the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) had adopted a Toolkit for Mainstreaming Employment and Decent Work into the policies, programmes and activities of the system.

7. The United Nations system approach to the Doha Development Round of trade negotiations was to advocate against premature liberalization that would harm the most vulnerable groups in society. Trade

liberalization should be accompanied by other policies aimed at strengthening production in countries at an early stage of development. The Accra Accord, which had emerged from the twelfth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XII), highlighted the many problems faced by developing countries in their efforts to integrate successfully into the international economic and financial system and set out a detailed agenda for progress in economic and social development, in areas such as commodities, trade, debt, investment, science and technology. United Nations support for the Aid for Trade initiative focused on building developing countries' capacity to use trade to expand economic growth and employment.

8. Despite the progress made, there was a need for further effort to integrate sustainable development, science and technology and financing for development into the United Nations system approach to eradicating poverty and hunger. The sixteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development had highlighted the need for a closer link between action taken against poverty and hunger and efforts to promote more sustainable patterns of production and consumption. In the field of financing for development, while the United Nations system had helped strengthen developing countries' capacity to assess their resource needs, attract and manage international resources and generate domestic resources to finance poverty reduction strategies, it could do more to help them address sectoral imbalances in resource allocation and investment decisions. The recent session of the Development Cooperation Forum and the upcoming Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus (Doha Review Conference) would further advance support and coordination.

9. The Secretary-General had emphasized the need to measure results and strengthen accountability for implementation as essential for achieving the MDGs; he had also sought to focus more closely on the development of Africa. Accordingly, he had established the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Gap Task Force and the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Africa Steering Group. Both bodies would make an important contribution to the High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals, to be held on 25 September 2008.

A discussion covered in the summary record ended at 3.25 p.m.

A panel discussion on the topic of "Working towards food security: the United Nations system approach" followed. The panel was chaired by Mr. Antonio Pedro Monteiro Lima (Cape Verde), Vice-President of the Council, and moderated by Mr. Thomas Stelzer, Assistant-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs. The panellists were Mr. John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, in his capacity as Coordinator of the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis; Mr. Themba N. Masuku, Director, Food and Agriculture Organization Liaison Office with the United Nations; Mr. Allan Jury, Director, Division of External Relations, World Food Programme; Ms. Julia Howard, Executive Director, Partnership to Cut Hunger and Poverty in Africa; and Mr. Christopher Delgado, Adviser, Agriculture and Rural Development, World Bank.

United Nations E/2008/SR.23

Economic and Social Council

Provisional
15 September 2008

Original: English

Substantive session of 2008
Coordination segment

Provisional summary record (partial)* of the 23rd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 8 July 2008, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Lima (Vice-President) ..... (Cape Verde)

Contents

The role of the United Nations system in implementing the ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2007 of the Economic and Social Council (*continued*)

* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting. A panel discussion was conducted.

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08-41400 (E)

The meeting was preceded by a panel discussion on the topic of "Rural development and the challenges of social welfare: A country-level perspective". The panel was chaired by Mr. Antonio Pedro Monteiro Lima (Cape Verde), Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council. The panellists were Mr. Bunmi Makinwa, Director, Africa Division, United Nations Population Fund; and Mr. Allan Jury, Director, Division of External Relations, World Food Programme.

In the absence of Mr. Mérorès (Haiti), Mr. Lima (Cape Verde), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The discussion covered in the summary record began at 11.40 a.m.

The role of the United Nations system in implementing the ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2007 of the Economic and Social Council (*continued*) (E/2008/21 and E/2008/77)

1. **Mr. Hunte** (Observer for Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the 2008 coordination segment afforded a timely and appropriate occasion to consider the United Nations system approach to implementation of the commitments reached at the major conferences and summits. The range of multidimensional challenges confronting the international community, the competition for resources and the current discussions on system-wide coherence in the General Assembly made it particularly opportune to focus on a coordinated response of the system as a whole. He stressed the Council's role in guiding coordination in the economic and social fields and the importance of existing, intergovernmentally agreed mandates on coordination of the system's development activities.

2. Discussions of a coordinated response to the development needs and priorities of developing countries should be placed in the context of new and emerging challenges. Climate change, food security, the energy crisis and financial instability in developed countries' markets would have a negative impact on their ability to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), by 2015.

3. The Group of 77 and China also welcomed the review of implementation of the 2007 ministerial declaration and, in particular, the focus on the role of the United Nations system in its implementation. The declaration stressed the need for a more comprehensive approach to achieving MDG Goal 1 by 2015 and identified a number of policy areas where urgent action was needed, including investment in rural and agricultural development; transfer of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries; education and training, especially for girls and women; and enhanced international cooperation to achieve full implementation of Agenda 21. Developments in the last 12 months had made those recommendations more relevant and urgent.

4. It was the responsibility of all countries, both developed and developing, to promote policies consistent with the commitments of the major United Nations conferences and summits in order to achieve development goals, including the eradication of poverty and hunger. In particular, developed countries needed to take urgent action to correct the distorting impact of their trade, energy, and financial policies and their unsustainable consumption and production patterns on the developing countries' prospects for achieving the MDGs.

5. The United Nations system had been improving its coordination through various mechanisms, in particular the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). The Group was of the view that the Board's work could be enhanced through greater intergovernmental oversight and accountability. Member States, and developing countries in particular, must be kept informed on a regular basis of all activities of the CEB, which should enhance its interaction with the Council through the coordination segment and at the highest management level.

6. Member States played a vital role in ensuring coordinated implementation of the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits at all levels and in ensuring a strong, direct link between coordination and development effectiveness. The Group reiterated that each country had the primary responsibility for its own development through the principle of national ownership and leadership, including at the country level.

7. The triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (A/RES/62/208) underscored that the ownership, leadership and full participation of national

authorities in the preparation and development of all planning and programming documents of the United Nations development system, including the common country assessment (CCA) and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), were key to ensuring that they responded to national development plans and strategies. The Framework and its results matrix should be used as the common programming tool at the country level in order to enhance aid efficiency and effectiveness.

8. The Council should instruct its subsidiary bodies to implement measures for promoting coordination within their respective mandates. In turn, these subsidiary bodies should ensure that policy guidance from the Council on the implementation of agreed outcomes, particularly those related to the MDGs, was integrated into their programmes of work and operational activities for development. The Group urged the Council to ensure that the subsidiary bodies gave top priority to the eradication of poverty and hunger in their thematic focus areas, including by allocating financial resources to reflect that priority, taking national development needs and priorities into account.

9. **Mr. Ripert** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro; and, in addition, Armenia and Moldova, said that the ministerial declaration adopted by the Council in 2007 had reiterated the international community's commitment to eradicating poverty and hunger and had placed that goal at the core of operations within the United Nations system. Numerous courses of action underscored the multidimensional nature of Goal 1 of the MDGs.

10. The overall progress towards that Goal concealed the persistence of inequalities both between and within countries while the spike in food and energy prices could jeopardize the progress that had been made. The European Union was particularly concerned about the situation in Africa, as well as that of fragile States and those that were emerging from conflicts; the challenges they presented must be addressed by donors, but primarily by African governments. The high-level meeting on Africa's development, to be held on 22 September 2008, would provide an opportunity to discuss Africa's development goals.

11. Further inroads against poverty and hunger were needed, first at national level since each country was responsible for its own development, and then at the international level through policies and programmes that offered better chances for development within the framework of a global partnership, by including States, the United Nations system, civil society and the private sector.

12. The European Union endorsed the United Nations system efforts in support of the MDGs, which were interdependent. Those efforts must be accompanied by actions and policies aimed at stimulating inclusive economic growth and must address cross-cutting issues such as human rights, democracy, democratic governance, gender equality, the empowerment of women, the promotion of decent work for all and improved integration into world information exchange networks. The European Union was determined to make 2008 a turning point in the effort to combat poverty. It was concerned by the slowness of progress towards MDG Goal 7, relating to sustainable development. It stressed the importance of the commitments made within the framework of the Commission for Sustainable Development and reaffirmed its intention to carry out the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit for Sustainable Development.

13. The European Union called for a better coordinated and longer-term international response to the current food crisis, in particular through the United Nations and international financial institutions and in the context of the Group of Eight. It welcomed the establishment by the Secretary-General of the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis and was determined to play its full part in implementing the Declaration agreed during the High-Level Conference on World Food Security, organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and held in Rome from 3 to 5 June 2008.

14. The European Union wished to stress the importance of analysing the situation in partner countries so that the United Nations system could respond appropriately to the needs of each country through use of the most relevant instruments. It attached great importance to efforts to strengthen coordination of the Organization's actions, including those taken to combat climate change, and to increase its effectiveness and efficiency through the Delivering as One initiative. In preparation for the Third High-

Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, to be held in Accra from 2 to 4 September 2008, the European Union echoed the statement, contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the role of the United Nations system in implementing the ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the 2007 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council (E/2008/21, para. 67), that the United Nations system should make more effective use of existing frameworks in order to ensure that the various dimensions of poverty and hunger were taken into account.

15. **Mr. Uskov** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation supported the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General (E/2008/21). The theme of eradicating poverty and hunger in the context of the MDGs was more relevant than ever, particularly in light of the emerging global food crisis. His delegation welcomed the establishment of the United Nations Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Gap Task Force in order to assess progress in implementation of the Millennium Declaration. The Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Africa Steering Group set up by the Secretary-General would also provide a broad review of existing implementation mechanisms for achieving the MDGs in Africa.

16. His delegation agreed that United Nations system analytical work should include building national capacities to analyse national constraints and opportunities, design effective development strategies and mobilize adequate resources for their implementation. There would be an increasing need for collective efforts not only by all parts of the United Nations system, including the World Trade Organization (WTO), but by other development partners such as international financial institutions, civil society and the private sector. Inter-agency coordination would also need to improve with a view to the implementation of targeted measures at the national, regional and global levels, in order to promote employment.

17. The Council's, work should be geared towards promoting a coherent and consistent approach within the United Nations system, under which equal attention should be paid to all key aspects of eradicating poverty and hunger. His delegation supported the Secretary-General's recommendation concerning the promotion of a system-wide programme of work on science and technology, including information communications technologies, for poverty reduction (E/2008/21, para. 68 (e)). Existing mechanisms and formats, could also be used, particularly during the coordination and operational segments of the Council, to discuss and adopt One Country Programmes.

18. **Ms. Asmady** (Indonesia) said that rising oil prices and the financial turbulence experienced by some developed countries were taking a toll on the world economy, rising food prices had made the issue of food security a global crisis, and climate change continued to be a threat. For many developing countries, that situation placed additional hurdles in the way of their development ambitions. She welcomed the recent initiatives taken at the global level to address those challenges, particularly, the establishment of the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Crisis and the Task Force's issuance of the draft comprehensive framework for action; the draft contained proposals for addressing the food crisis and easing the burden on the poor in many developing countries.

19. Any solution to the global food and energy crisis must be multidimensional. Efforts must be made to mainstream the agriculture sector into national development strategies, which should not only aim to increase productivity at farm level; they must also include policies for enhancing rural infrastructure, developing agro-industry and agri-business in rural areas and giving small and local farmers access to domestic markets. The Council could contribute by monitoring the effectiveness of such policy options. An integrated early warning system to monitor the status of global food security would also be valuable.

20. The recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General (E/2008/21) highlighted important areas where national capacities needed to be improved in order to help countries face their current challenges. Member States must be kept informed of the board's activities on a regular basis, perhaps through enhanced interaction with the Council during the coordination segment.

21. **Mr. Ali** (Malaysia) said that in implementing the 2007 ministerial declaration, the Organization had played a valuable role in advocating the importance of reflecting local particularities in frameworks for development and for the eradication of poverty and hunger. However, anecdotal evidence suggested that that approach had been less well reflected in bilateral development cooperation, where cost pressures were forcing donors to adopt uniform methods of evaluation

across all programme countries without taking the countries' perspective into account. Since that problem was partly a result of the countries' lack of evaluation capacity, he endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendation that the United Nations system should do more to promote national ownership (E/2008/21, para. 68 (j)); that approach was consistent with the recently adopted triennial comprehensive policy review. The Council's role in coordinating the work of the United Nations, could also be improved, including through more meaningful interaction with the CEB. However, the fact that the Board reported to the governing bodies rather than to the Council would make perfect synchronicity with the Council's work impossible.

22. Although the Secretary-General's report mentioned the importance of science and technology in efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, it did not contain any reference to the role played by the Commission on Science and Technology for Development. The United Nations should do more to promote science and technology as a means of achieving the internationally agreed development goals, and those of the Council's ministerial declarations by establishing a framework for facilitating technology transfer and promoting a view of developing countries as producers, rather than mere consumers, of technology. In that context, Malaysia had recently established the International Centre for South-South Cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation and had hosted the World Congress on Information Technology in May 2008.

23. **Ms. Kuzganova** (Kazakhstan) said that the deterioration of the world economy and the global food crisis had undermined the international community's efforts to combat humanitarian threats, particularly that of famine. Whereas, in the past, hunger could readily be attributed to droughts or other natural disasters, one of its main causes was now the high cost of food. The need to ensure food security had become a problem that faced not only the least developed countries, but also countries with rapidly developing markets and even developed countries. The lack of global food security had resulted from a combination of factors: the rise in energy prices; the rapid increase in the world's population; the increased production of biofuels; global climate change; and the reduction in global food reserves. The international community must take decisive action to stabilize the global economy; national policies should focus on increasing food production and gaining access to world food markets, without depleting natural resources or damaging the environment.

24. Her Government was working to offset the negative consequences of the current global economic situation through policies designed to prevent a slowdown in economic development, curb national inflation and ensure the continued provision of food commodities. Kazakhstan's agricultural industry had seen a number of positive developments in recent years, including rising production levels and an overall increase in direct agricultural subsidies, which totalled $185 million in 2008.

25. The Government had also allocated an additional US$ 266 million to ensuring food security through measures such as the purchase of grain from State reserves; subsidized interest rates on loans from second-tier banks to agricultural processing companies; and subsidized interest rates for the lease of reprocessing equipment and special technology. In order to stabilize the domestic price of core foodstuffs and to ensure that the population had continued access to sufficient food, the Government had introduced temporary food export bans, reduced customs tariffs on the most important commodities and established grain stabilization funds in major cities.

26. The coordinated efforts of all countries to establish a joint agricultural policy aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of the agricultural industry would play an important role in ensuring food security at the national level. Her delegation hoped that the current discussion would provide a useful contribution to the search for ways of addressing the problems of food security, malnutrition and hunger at the national and international levels.

27. **Mr. Chave** (Observer for Switzerland) said that there had been substantive but uneven progress in reducing poverty and hunger worldwide. Countries with equivalent levels of per capita income showed different levels of progress in job creation, employment and agricultural development, underscoring that there were no "one-size-fits-all" solutions and that reality called for differentiated, country-specific approaches. As the 2007 ministerial declaration pointed out, the challenges related to the eradication of poverty and hunger were multidimensional in nature. Owing to its diversity of

experience and expertise, the United Nations might be the best-equipped system for addressing such complex issues. However, its efforts needed to be coordinated carefully, especially at country level. The global and vertical initiatives and actions described in the Secretary-General's report (E/2008/21) must be translated into coordinated action at the country level and integrated within development assistance frameworks.

28. Only a few months after the Council's 2007 ministerial declaration had referred to the fight against hunger as a central priority for the United Nations system, the world had experienced a global food crisis. Although warning signals had been issued by some parts of that system, a globally coordinated response in the form of the Secretary-General's Task Force had occurred only after the crisis had begun. The High-level Committee on Programmes and the Committee for Development Policy could play an important role in anticipating global problems. In order to combat poverty and hunger in a comprehensive manner, an integrated approach to rural and urban development that combined social, environmental and economic policies was needed. Urbanization should be seen not only as a problem to be solved, but as an opportunity for sustainable development.

29. Turning to the Secretary-General's report on the role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, in the light of relevant General Assembly relations, including resolution 61/16 (E/2008/77), he said that his delegation was pleased that the annual ministerial review had established a multi-year programme of work, although a longer-term perspective would have been preferable, and agreed that the annual review process would be a more effective way for the Council to assume its overall responsibilities in the area of integrated conference follow-up. Its delegation also supported the idea, mentioned in paragraph 51 of the report that the report on integrated conference follow-up should be produced triennially.

30. While recognizing that the dual normative and operational nature of the United Nations system was one of its greatest assets, his delegation did not understand the suggestion made in paragraph 58 of the Secretary-General's report and sought clarification.

31. Lastly, in order to further strengthen the coherence between the policy and operational aspects of the United Nations system, the coordination segment should be dedicated systematically to implementation of the previous year's ministerial declaration.

32. **Mr. Liu** Liqun (China) said that in order to eliminate poverty and hunger, both policy complementarity and coordination among stakeholders were necessary. Cooperation among United Nations agencies on the basis of the priorities identified in the ministerial declaration had already made a positive contribution to global efforts in that regard. China supported achievement of the MDGs as a development priority, but the issue of poverty and hunger could not be addressed with a "one-size-fits-all" approach; the particular situations and specific needs of countries must be taken into consideration. Developing countries should be helped to formulate appropriate strategies and policies; his delegation welcomed United Nations agencies' efforts to reflect national experiences in their policies and programmes.

33. The rising prices of food and energy, climate change and a slowing world economy had complicated developing countries' efforts to eradicate poverty and meet the MDGs, and had jeopardized the achievements of the past decade. The international community, and developed countries in particular, must honour their commitments with regard to official development assistance (ODA), debt reduction, market access, climate change, energy and food; the United Nations and other relevant regional and international organizations should also increase their financial, technical and capacity-building support for developing countries.

34. The impact of rising energy and food costs on poverty eradication efforts required special attention. All stakeholders should strengthen their cooperation and provide an integrated response in the areas of aid, finance and trade; his delegation supported a leading and coordinating role for the United Nations in that regard.

35. The United Nations system should continue to improve its internal coordination and its active cooperation with other partners in order to mobilize the potential of all stakeholders to address obstacles to poverty eradication. His delegation supported the Council's role in encouraging the participation of the private sector and civil society in international

cooperation for development, achievement of the MDGs and implementation of the United Nations development agenda.

36. **Mr. Young** (United States of America) said that the international community had made great strides towards eradicating poverty. However, with every success it became clear that much more needed to be done. Despite the challenges of the uncertain economic times, impressive growth was being seen in many developing countries; their average growth rate was expected to be a resilient 6.5 per cent in 2008, well above the rates of the 1990s and the early twenty-first century. Even in Africa, where the challenge of economic growth was the most difficult, trends were improving; a majority of low-income African countries showed growth in their per capita income of 2 per cent or more and among low- and middle-income Asian countries, with only two exceptions, growth ranged between 3.5 and 7.5 per cent. The growth trend was increasingly positive in Latin America, as well.

37. Yet, despite those positive trends, critical problems continued to hinder efforts to eradicate poverty. The international community should continue to work together and should not seek overly simplistic answers to difficult challenges. For example, urbanization was not the cause of poverty; critical services could be delivered cost-effectively through sensible strategies. Similarly, climate change was often incorrectly listed as the sole cause of natural disasters and a direct contributor to global poverty, and corn-based biofuel production was said to play a major role in the rapid increase in food prices, ignoring other significant contributing factors. Policy should reflect objective analysis; progress against global poverty and hunger depended on a comprehensive approach.

38. While ODA could have a catalytic effect, experience had shown that trade, investment, and other private financial flows were the primary drivers in reducing poverty. The United States of America had committed more than US$ 7 billion in trade-related assistance since 2001 and was increasingly supporting national ownership, promoting best practices to improve aid effectiveness and leveraging private resources. While targets such as the MDGs were useful and progress was being made, the international community should focus on effectiveness through ownership and resist the urge to focus exclusively on alleged "gaps" to be filled. An absolute increase in aid would not ensure success in meeting the mutually agreed goals. The commitment made in the Millennium Declaration required the global community to promote ownership, build capacity, foster enabling and transparent environments and support processes that would enable Governments to provide desperately needed services to their people.

39. As part of that effort to ensure the effective delivery of aid, international organizations must remain focused on their core mission. Country efforts to achieve the MDGs would only be hampered by mission overlap, and discussion in the Council of matters best left to other bodies, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), might not be appropriate or useful. Significant gains were more likely when agencies focused on their own core missions and comparative advantages while working collaboratively with others.

40. It was essential for countries to take ownership of its development goals and to have their own national strategies for achieving them. They should be free to choose their own goals, including the MDGs, in light of their different challenges and priorities. His Government supported the work of the World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in their "twin track" approach to rural development, as well as the efforts of, inter alia, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) to ensure that civil society and the private sector took ownership of critical poverty and hunger eradication programmes.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.

United Nations E/2008/SR.24

Economic and Social Council

Provisional

15 September 2008

Original: English

Substantive session of 2008
Coordination segment

Provisional summary record (partial)* of the 24th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 8 July 2008, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Lima (Vice-President) ..... (Cape Verde)

Contents

The role of the United Nations system in implementing the ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2007 of the Council (*continued*)

* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting. A panel discussion was conducted.

Corrections to this record should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of this document* to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza.

08-41403 (E)

In the absence of Mr. Mérorès (Haiti), Mr. Lima (Cape Verde), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

The role of the United Nations system in implementing the ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2007 of the Council (*continued*) (E/2008/21 and E/2008/77)

1. **Mr. Stelzer** (Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, in the light of relevant General Assembly resolutions, including resolution 61/16 (E/2008/77), said that at the conferences of the 1990s and the Millennium Summit, a global consensus on policies and actions for advancing poverty eradication and sustainable development had been reached. Development issues had been brought to the forefront of the multilateral debate, giving renewed impetus to the Organization's work in the economic, social and related fields. Although the focus of the conferences had varied, the issues addressed were interlinked. Since the agreed goals and targets could be achieved only as part of a comprehensive United Nations development agenda, conference follow-up mechanisms had framed their work around the internationally agreed development goals and had adopted a comprehensive approach.

2. The Council had played a central role throughout that process. At the 2005 World Summit, Member States had renewed their commitments and resolved to step up their efforts to implement the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). To that end, they had devised a stronger system whereby the Council and its subsidiary bodies operated in a unified manner within the single framework of the development agenda. The annual ministerial review had given the Council a powerful tool for translating the integrated, coordinated approach into substantive reviews of implementation.

3. The report highlighted progress on conference follow-up as it related to the theme of the 2008 annual ministerial review and the main policy issues discussed by the functional commissions; addressed the institutional aspects of follow-up processes; and discussed how to promote policy coherence and strengthen the link between policy and operations. Although the theme of the 2008 ministerial review had been adopted after most of the functional commissions had established their multi-year work programmes, they had contributed to that theme through their discussion of specific aspects of sustainable development: urbanization, agriculture and rural development, and the environmental statistics and indicators needed for a policy debate on climate change.

4. The report also described a number of procedural improvements that had facilitated the substantive work of the Council machinery. In particular, collaboration among the functional commissions had helped enhance policy coherence on cross-cutting issues, while the adoption of multi-year programmes by both the commissions and the Council had facilitated the engagement of all actors.

5. Since its launch in 2007, the annual ministerial review — the purpose of which was to strengthen accountability by providing a forum for reviewing and renewing commitments and by mobilizing and maintaining the momentum needed to achieve agreed goals — had strengthened substantive integration and the Council system's ability to work in a more coordinated manner.

6. The annual review's global aspect provided a high-level annual overview, while country presentations and country-led meetings offered a national and regional perspective. By focusing on cross-sectoral themes common to the outcomes of major United Nations conferences, the review provided the Council with a vehicle that was both specific, and sufficiently comprehensive to provide a substantive review of the implementation of conferences and their follow-up processes.

7. In order to have a real impact on people's livelihood, the United Nations system's conceptual and standard-setting work must be translated into progress at the country level. The national voluntary presentations provided an opportunity for countries to learn from each other's experiences in implementing national development strategies; linking the discussion of policy options to specific country experiences brought the Council closer to bridging the divide

between the normative and operational work of the United Nations.

8. The annual ministerial review had made the process of integrated and coordinated follow-up to conferences more substantive and visible while strengthening the Council's engagement with its functional commissions and with United Nations system funds, programmes and specialized agencies. During its current session, the Council would need to discuss the way forward with regard to reporting on the integrated and coordinated follow-up to conferences. As the integrated substantive review was now being pursued through the annual ministerial review process and as procedural improvements to follow-up processes had been completed for the time being, the Council might wish to triennialize the report on integrated conference follow-up so as to provide a reasonable time period before the next overall review of that issue. Any structural and procedural changes aimed at making the Council system more coherent and integrative might then be reviewed at regular intervals.

9. **Mr. Keberet** (Observer for Ethiopia), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the poverty and hunger faced on a massive scale by the developing world, particularly Africa, was being aggravated by international financial instability and soaring food and energy prices. The Council's coordination segment must address those unprecedented challenges, through system-wide collective action in an integrated, coordinated fashion. The United Nations system should play a proactive role, rather than simply responding to needs as they arose, and should pursue its efforts to coordinate early collective responses. It was important for the coordination segment to deliver action- and results-oriented guidelines on major coordination issues.

10. The 2007 Ministerial Declaration addressed the need to strengthen efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger through global partnerships and system-wide approaches and underscored the importance of international support in order to increase resources for development and build developing countries' capacity. The Group noted that the Organization was endeavouring to address related challenges in a comprehensive manner and appreciated the efforts of various United Nations agencies to coordinate their activities.

11. The Group welcomed the recent establishment of the Secretary-General's High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis and the High-level Conference on World Food Security, held in Rome in June 2008. It commended the Organization's efforts to help African countries ensure food security by designing specific national and regional programmes under the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and expressed its appreciation to the Secretary-General for launching the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Gap Task Force and the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Africa Steering Group. Both initiatives would provide important inputs to the high-level event on the MDGs and the high-level meeting on Africa's development needs, scheduled for September 2008.

12. In that connection, he drew attention to the African Union Declaration on Responding to the Challenges of High Food Prices and Agriculture Development, which had been adopted at the eleventh ordinary session of the African Union, held at Sharm El-Sheikh from 30 June to 1 July 2008. The declaration called, inter alia, for a global partnership to address the causes and effects of the current food crisis and for the immediate launching of a high-level dialogue between food exporters and importers from developed and developing countries. The international community should continue to promote the Declaration's objectives and support its implementation so as to ensure an effective, sustained response to the challenges of high food prices and agricultural development in Africa.

13. The Council should provide its subsidiary bodies with guidance on promoting coordination within their respective mandates and areas of competence and, the United Nations system should improve its cooperation and coordination with the economic commissions and other regional entities in order to ensure that global challenges were addressed effectively. Existing frameworks and instruments for country-level support, such as the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), should be strengthened further in an effort to streamline system activities aimed at responding to countries' development needs, strengthening national ownership and building capacity; such activities should be implemented and evaluated under the UNDAF umbrella in order to avoid duplication.

14. Lastly, the Council's review of the role of the United Nations in implementing the 2007 Ministerial Declaration should take account of the many new and emerging challenges to development and of the need to place special emphasis on the development needs of Africa. The Council should further strengthen its guiding role in addressing those issues through a system-wide coordinated approach.

15. **Ms. Kharashun** (Belarus) said that her delegation supported the recommendations contained in the report and considered that eradicating poverty and hunger was a key objective which could not be achieved without a global partnership for development. The United Nations should join with other multilateral bodies to further international development cooperation.

16. International trade was a key driver of economic growth and poverty reduction. Her delegation shared the Secretary-General's view that liberalization could not be considered a panacea and should be accompanied by development policies for industry and other productive sectors in order to be effective. Development activities should be directed by genuinely national strategies reflecting the situation on the ground.

17. While the Doha Round of international trade negotiations could play a significant role in eradicating poverty, the current economic and commercial landscape was afflicted by unilateral coercion and a tendency for the right to join the World Trade Organization to be decided by monopoly. The use of unilateral measures to exert pressure in connection with non-economic issues was incompatible with international legal standards; it constituted interference in the domestic affairs of States and stood in the way of achieving development goals.

18. Her delegation supported the 2007 Ministerial Declaration's emphasis on the role of employment in reducing poverty and the central place it occupied in national development strategies. It welcomed the joint efforts of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) to promote full and productive employment and decent work for all. The contribution of the regional commissions, which knew the local situation and could propose suitable methods of implementing policy, should be increased.

19. While encouraging progress had been made in meeting the MDGs, new challenges threatened to make it difficult to reach the 2015 target date. The social pressures caused by sharp rises in staple food prices threatened to negate gains in combating poverty and hunger. Her delegation therefore welcomed the establishment of the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis.

20. A more selective approach to alternative sources of energy should be taken, using technology to ensure that biofuel production did not adversely affect the market for food, that renewable energy was produced without harm to the environment and that the use of alternative and renewable energy sources was combined with energy conservation. However, such innovation required initial investment beyond the means of many countries, especially developing countries. Her delegation had suggested that thematic debates on the subject should be included in the sixty-third session of the General Assembly, in light of the central role of the United Nations in providing all countries with access to energy-efficient technology and new and renewable energy sources.

21. **Mr. Maboundou** (Congo), referring to the Secretary-General's report on the role of the United Nations system in implementing the Ministerial Declaration of the high-level segment of the 2007 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council (E/2008/21), welcomed the system's progress in developing and pursuing more comprehensive approaches to the eradication of poverty and hunger, particularly in the areas of employment generation, trade, and rural and agricultural development. However, more needed to be done to integrate sustainable development and science and technology dimensions into United Nations programmes and activities in support of national poverty eradication efforts.

22. In addition to meeting the targets set in the 2007 Ministerial Declaration, the United Nations should ensure that development partners understood each country's specific needs and situation so that they would be better equipped to help developing countries design coherent, viable national development policies and enter the global economy, primarily by attaining the MDGs. He welcomed the establishment by the Secretary-General of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Gap Task Force and the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Africa Steering Group. His

delegation supported the recommendations contained in the report.

23. While proper implementation of the initiatives emanating from the decisions taken at the World Summit on Sustainable Development would require considerable funds, it was even more important to improve coordination under United Nations auspices in order to avoid duplication; he welcomed the Organization's growing involvement in initiatives such as the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD).

24. The Government of the Congo had recently approved the country's poverty reduction strategy paper. That document, the framework for national development activities, had enabled it to take action in the areas covered in the 2007 Ministerial Declaration. In an attempt to mitigate the impact of the global food crisis, his Government had adopted a national food security programme aimed at boosting production capacity at all levels and an agricultural emergency programme for the period 2008-2009, which contained a series of measures aimed at addressing the rise in the price of essential items.

25. Those programmes, which were designed to mirror the UNDP Human Development Report at the national level, would benefit from a better understanding of complementarities between social and agricultural policies; technological innovation, poverty eradication and energy policies; and bioenergy and food security policies. In turn, a better understanding of national, regional and subregional challenges — something that the United Nations hoped to gain by promoting multi-stakeholder approaches and partnerships — would give development projects the best chance of success.

26. **Mr. Ibrahim** (Observer for Nigeria) said that while there had been modest success in implementing the 2007 Ministerial Declaration, progress had been hampered by shortcomings in the global partnership for development, a lack of coherence and coordination in the United Nations system approach and the multiple crises caused by international financial turmoil, high food and fuel prices and the devastating effects of climate change.

27. Eradicating poverty and hunger was critical to the larger goal of sustainable development and required coordination of development policies at the national, regional and global levels. The establishment of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Gap Task Force to track commitments made under Goal 8 of the MDGs was a positive step, as was the establishment of the MDG Africa Steering Group; its focus on the need to meet existing commitments to Africa would help the continent achieve all the MDGs.

28. Nigeria's experience had shown that increased agricultural production and improved infrastructures were critical to eradicating poverty because of the intrinsic links among agriculture, rural development and employment generation. A strategy that focused on both small-scale farmers and mechanized farming would help address the food crisis and bring a green revolution to Africa. Infrastructure improvements would not only boost agriculture but promote industrial development, while inclusive international trade, aid for trade, foreign investment in production, transfer of renewable technologies and equitable disbursement of the climate change Adaptation Fund would promote sustainable development and achievement of the MDGs.

29. **Ms. Johnson** (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) said that while the report of the Secretary-General usefully summarized the work of the United Nations system and gave prominence to a number of issues of particular concern to the International Federation, it failed to highlight the importance of partnerships at national level with community-based organizations that had a good understanding of local priorities and challenges. The emphasis on partnerships lay at the root of the declaration, "Together for Humanity", adopted at the November 2007 International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which stressed that current challenges could not be addressed by any one Government or organization.

30. The International Federation would have liked to see the report of the Secretary-General take a more forthright approach to climate change by emphasizing adaptation in developing countries, particularly the least developed countries and the small island developing States, and by stressing capacity-building needs at community level, where the International Federation was extremely active.

31. As diseases and other public health challenges crossed political boundaries, national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies worked in partnership with governments to prepare for crises such as outbreaks of avian influenza and the associated human pandemic; to

that end, formal and informal working relationships had been established with the World Health Organization's headquarters and regional offices.

32. In conclusion, while the International Federation shared the concerns expressed in the 2007 Ministerial Declaration and in the report of the Secretary-General, it believed that the United Nations system should look more widely for partners and should better reflect such partnerships in reports to the Council, particularly in light of Goal 8 of the MDGs on the global partnership for development.

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 3.55 p.m.

A panel discussion on the topic of "the role of the Economic and Social Council in addressing violence against women in all its forms and manifestations: a dialogue with the chairpersons of the functional commissions" followed. The panel was chaired by Mr. Antonio Pedro Monteiro Lima (Cape Verde), Vice-President of the Council, and moderated by Mr. Olivier Belle (Belgium), Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women. The Panellists were Ms. Lorena Giménez (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), Vice-Chairperson of the Commission for Social Development, Mr. Pali Lehohla (South Africa), Chairperson of the Statistical Commission and Ms. Elena Zuñiga (Mexico), Chairperson of the Commission on Population and Development.

United Nations E/2008/SR.25

Economic and Social Council

Provisional

15 September 2008

Original: English

Substantive session of 2008
Coordination segment

Provisional summary record (partial)* of the 25th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 9 July 2008, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Lima (Vice-President) ..... (Cape Verde)

Contents

The role of the United Nations system in implementing the ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2007 of the Council (*continued*)

* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting. A panel discussion was conducted.

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08-41586 (E)

The meeting was preceded by a panel discussion on the topic of "Coherence: Strengthening the normative and operational link in the work of the United Nations on rural employment". The panel was chaired by Mr. Antonio Pedro Monteiro Lima (Cape Verde), Vice-President of the Council, and moderated by Mr. Assane Diop, Executive Director, Social Protection Sector, International Labour Organization. The Panellists were Mr. Tareq Md. Ariful Islam, Vice-Chairperson, Commission for Social Development; Mr. Olivier Belle, Chairperson, Commission on the Status of Women; Mr. Juan Eduardo Eguiguren, representative of the Chairperson, Commission on Science and Technology for Development; Mr. José Eduardo Dantas Ferreira Barbosa, President, Executive Board, World Food Programme; Mr. Jean-Marie Ehouzou, Chairperson, Executive Board, United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund; and Mr. Zdzislaw Rapacki, Chairperson, Governing Council, International Labour Organization.

In the absence of Mr. Mérorès (Haiti), Mr. Lima (Cape Verde), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The discussion covered in the summary record began at 12.25 p.m.

The role of the United Nations system in implementing the ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2007 of the Council (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Stelzer** (Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs) recalled that the coordination segment had focused on several aspects of the eradication of poverty and hunger: food security, rural development and the challenges of social welfare, violence against women in all its forms and manifestations, and coherence between the normative and operational work of the United Nations system on the issue of rural employment.

2. The global food crisis had highlighted important gaps in the system's approach to food security. In particular, it had emphasized the tenuous link between emergency response to immediate food needs and longer-term development strategies for sustainable food production. The crisis had provided an opportunity to reflect on current approaches and to reorient strategies and policies. Discussions during the segment had shown that there was consensus on the need to tackle the food crisis, climate change and energy shortages comprehensively within the framework of sustainable development. The system had moved quickly to devise a comprehensive strategy; the challenge now was to make it operational.

3. The discussions had also shown that the United Nations system should refocus on the need to make the rural sector an engine of growth and poverty eradication by ensuring that strategies for sustainable agricultural and rural development fully integrated the social dimension. The system had an important role to play in enhancing understanding of the social impact of rural and agricultural development policies, especially on employment; helping formulate national poverty eradication strategies; and supporting countries' efforts to allocate scarce resources to critical sectors. United Nations agencies needed to join forces in enhancing their analytical and research capacity to supplement national efforts.

4. Rural employment was central to poverty eradication. Three quarters of the world's poor lived in areas where a paucity of economic opportunities; under-investment; poor infrastructure and public services, including education; and underdeveloped markets compounded the difficulties of employment creation. The United Nations recognized the centrality of employment, especially rural employment, to the eradication of poverty and hunger and had promoted a comprehensive policy framework for addressing the problem. The broad consensus on that framework had promoted greater coherence and cooperation within the system at the normative and operational levels. As the preceding panel discussion had shown, the challenges in strengthening the system's efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger involved not only scaling up current initiatives but adopting more comprehensive approaches.

5. Violence against women persisted in all regions of the world as a pervasive violation of human rights and a major impediment to achieving gender equality, as well as poverty eradication and development. Prevention was essential and discussions during the segment had stressed the need for better tools to identify and tackle the problem. The Council's functional commissions had a critical role to play; lessons from their work should be shared within the United Nations system and the coordination segment had provided a platform for doing so.

6. **The President** said that there was consensus on the need to rethink current strategies and policies for dealing with the global food crisis. It was imperative to take immediate, concerted action that made short-term interventions fully compatible with longer-term strategies. New approaches needed to take into account the problem's multiple causes and its social, economic and environmental consequences for most countries. The approach developed and promoted by the United Nations system emphasized the need for coordinated action, especially between humanitarian and development interventions, and for a coherent, comprehensive framework for action within the context of sustainable development.

7. The need to refocus on agriculture and rural development had also emerged as a clear message from debate on the crisis. Agricultural development was essential to poverty eradication and economic growth, but it was not sustainable unless accompanied by social development. The challenge was to ensure balanced interaction between social programmes and agricultural and rural development.

8. Women were an important untapped resource for social and economic growth in the majority of developing countries, and empowering them ensured rapid progress towards the MDGs. Violence against women was not only a dehumanizing practice that should be eliminated in its own right, but a major obstacle to achievement of Goal 1 of the MDGs.

9. The Council could play a prominent role in ensuring that the objective of full rural employment was at the centre of efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger as an integral part of the United Nations system strategy. The segment had highlighted the work being done at the policy level and the need to translate that work into action at the country level, including by providing a platform for the normative and operational agencies of the system in order to harmonize their work.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.

United Nations E/2008/SR.26

Economic and Social Council

Provisional

15 September 2008

Original: English

Substantive session for 2008
Operational activities segment

Provisional summary record (partial)* of the 26th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 10 July 2008, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Dapkiunas (Vice-President) ..... (Belarus)

Contents

Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation

(a) Follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly and the Council

* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting. A panel discussion was conducted.

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08-41724 (E)

In the absence of Mr. Mérorès (Haiti), Mr. Dapkiunas (Belarus), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation

(a) Follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly and the Council (E/2008/46, E/2008/49, E/2008/60 and E/2008/83; and E/2008/CRP.4)

1. **The President**, opening the operational activities segment, said that the segment was critical to the Council's discussion of how the United Nations could further improve its development cooperation in preparation for the high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals, to be held on 25 September 2008; the Doha Review Conference, to be held from 29 November to 2 December 2008; and the Third High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, to be held in Accra from 2 to 4 September 2008. The Council's task was to ensure that the Organization implemented initiatives in line with the recommendations contained in the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (A/RES/62/208).

2. International development cooperation had changed in recent years with the emergence of new actors and aid modalities against a background of decline in official development assistance (ODA). The principles of national ownership and leadership were now at the core of efforts undertaken by the United Nations system, particularly those relating to the triennial policy review. The system needed to find its place in a changing environment and put its comparative advantages to best use. The policy review underscored that there was no one-size-fits-all approach to development and that United Nations development assistance should respond to the needs of programme countries in a manner fully consistent with their national development goals. The crises the world was currently experiencing and the impact of climate change threatened to reverse progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

3. During the general debate, participants would have an opportunity to exchange views about the way in which the United Nations system was preparing to implement the triennial policy review; he urged Council members to make the most of the mechanisms provided for in the policy review in order to ensure its effective implementation. The Council played a crucial role in coordinating the work of the system and in providing clear direction to United Nations funds and programmes concerning the implementation of policies set by the General Assembly at the national, regional and international levels; it should reflect on how it could perform its function even more efficiently, bearing in mind the recent policy review and the upcoming international development forums. The draft resolution for the operational segment (E/2008/L.12) was focused and well-balanced and should serve as an excellent basis for clear, action-oriented guidance to the United Nations system.

Statement by the Deputy Secretary-General

4. **The Deputy Secretary-General** said that the General Assembly's decision to conduct the triennial comprehensive policy review had shown the international community and the United Nations system that Member States were committed to the Organization's operational activities for development. It was critical to increase financial contributions to the United Nations system, notably to the core budgets, in order to help programme countries respond to the many challenges confronting them. It was also important to improve the system's coherence, effectiveness and relevance. At the national level, the United Nations needed to support the central role of the resident coordinators in improving the Organization's effectiveness in responding to country priorities; at Headquarters, business practices needed to be simplified and harmonized.

5. The recent reform of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) should enable the United Nations system to respond more coherently to the needs set out in the policy review. It was also possible to strengthen coherence based on the experience gained in the eight pilot countries of the One UN programme. The United Nations was working to implement the provisions of General Assembly resolution 62/208 on the policy review and was counting on Member States to do their part to enhance the effectiveness of operational activities for development.

6. Introducing the documents for the segment, she said that the report of the Secretary-General on the management process for the implementation of General Assembly resolution 62/208 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities

for development of the United Nations system (E/2008/49) responded to the General Assembly's request for a workplan for clear guidelines, targets, benchmarks and time frames for implementing the resolution; she looked forward to the Council's views on the best way to put the resulting workplan into action.

7. The report of the Secretary-General on the functioning of the resident coordinator system, including costs and benefits (E/2008/60), provided an overview of that system and the changes it had recently undergone; in particular, it examined the participation of United Nations development organizations. There again, the Council's guidance would be important, including in determining the themes and scope of the following year's report.

8. According to the report of the Secretary-General on the comprehensive statistical analysis of the financing of operational activities for development of the United Nations system for 2006 (E/2008/46), the total value of contributions received by the United Nations system for operational activities in 2006 had amounted to US$ 17.2 billion, a 2 per cent decrease in real terms over the previous year. Core funding for 2006 had represented only 29.5 per cent of total funding, and expenditures of the United Nations system for operational activities in 2006 had totalled US$ 16.4 billion.

9. At the General Assembly's request, the report also highlighted steps for building a comprehensive, sustainable and consistent financial data and reporting system for United Nations operational activities for development. Overall, it was a reminder of the precarious funding situation of the United Nations development system. In the coming months, the Secretary-General would report on actions taken to improve the quantity and quality of funding for such activities.

10. The conference room paper on actions taken by the executive boards and governing bodies of the United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies in the area of simplification and harmonization of the United Nations development system (E/2008/CRP.4) had been prepared in response to a General Assembly request for the executive boards and governing bodies of the funds, programmes and specialized agencies to assess simplification and harmonization measures. Although it would like to have been able to move more quickly, the United Nations system was strongly committed to progress in that area.

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 10.25 a.m.

A panel discussion on the topic of "The United Nations system in a changing aid environment: Implications and comparative advantages" followed. The panel was chaired by Mr. Andrei Dapkiunas (Belarus), Vice-President of the Council, and moderated by Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Africa. The panellists were Mr. Francis K. Butagira, Permanent Representative of Uganda to the United Nations, Mr. Aiichiro Yamamoto, Resident Representative, Japan International Cooperation Agency; Ms. Thoraya Obaid, Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund and Mr. Bruce Jenks, Assistant Administrator and Director, Partnerships Bureau, United Nations Development Programme.

United Nations E/2008/SR.27

Economic and Social Council

Provisional

15 September 2008

Original: English

Substantive session of 2008
Operational activities segment

Provisional summary record (partial)* of the 27th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 10 July 2008, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Dapkiunas (Vice-President) ..... (Belarus)

Contents

Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation (*continued*)

(a) Follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly and the Council (*continued*)

* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting. A panel discussion was conducted.

Corrections to this record should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of this document* to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza.

08-41727 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation (*continued*)

(a) Follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly and the Council (*continued*)
E/2008/46, E/2008/49, E/2008/83, E/2008/60 and E/2008/CRP.4)

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.

A panel discussion on the topic of "Strengthening United Nations development system's responsiveness to the different needs of programme countries" followed. The panel was chaired by Mr. Andrei Dapkiunas (Belarus), Vice-President of the Council, and moderated by Mr. Thomas Stelzer, Assistant-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs. The panellists were Mr. José Luis Gutteres, Vice-Prime Minister, Timor-Leste; Mr. Henrique Banze, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Mozambique; Mr. Rodolfo Pastor Fasquelle, Coordinator of the Social Cabinet and Minister of Culture, Arts and Sports, Honduras; and Mr. Jan Vandemoortele, Senior Advisor on Policy, Division of Policy and Practice, United Nations Children's Fund (former Resident Coordinator in Pakistan).

United Nations E/2008/SR.28

Economic and Social Council

Provisional

15 September 2008

Original: English

Substantive session for 2008
Operational activities segment

Provisional summary record (partial)* of the 28th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 11 July 2008, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Dapkiunas (Vice-President) ..... (Belarus)

Contents

Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation (*continued*)

(b) Reports of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Food Programme

* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting. A panel discussion was conducted.

Corrections to this record should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of this document* to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza.

08-41913 (E)

In the absence of Mr. Mérorès (Haiti), Mr. Dapkiunas (Belarus), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation (*continued*)

(b) Reports of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme/the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Food Programme (E/2007/35, E/2008/5, E/2008/6-E/ICEF/2008/3 and Corr.1, E/2008/14, E/2008/34 (Part I) and Add.1, E/2008/36 and E/2008/L.8)

1. **The President** said that dialogue with the executive heads of the United Nations funds and programmes was an important mechanism for furthering the role of the Council as the principal body to coordinate the economic, social, humanitarian and related work of the United Nations system. It was a crucial moment for the Council to assist in guiding the work of the funds and programmes in implementing the policies defined by the General Assembly.

2. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Food Programme (WFP) accounted for more than 60 per cent of the expenditure on operational activities for development, and were present in most programme countries. Their work had a great impact on trends regarding the contribution of the United Nations system to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

3. Discussions in both the high-level and operational activities segments had drawn attention to the numerous challenges and opportunities facing development cooperation as a whole, and to the urgency of moving decisively into action. The key issues were meeting official development assistance (ODA) targets, improving the quality and allocation of aid and building greater coherence in economic and development cooperation policies.

4. It was hoped that the forthcoming panel discussion on the implementation of the MDGs would bring the implications of the guidance provided by the most recent triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development (A/RES/62/208) into perspective.

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 10.10 a.m.

A panel discussion on the theme "Implementation of the Millennium Development Goals in the context of current challenges" followed. The panel was chaired by Mr. Andrei Dapkiunas (Belarus), Vice-President of the Council, and moderated by Mr. Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General, Economic and Social Affairs. The panellists were Mr. Kemal Dervis, Administrator, United Nations Development Programme; Ms. Ann M. Veneman, Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund; Ms. Thoraya Obaid, Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund; and Mr. John Powell, Deputy Executive Director, World Food Programme.

United Nations E/2008/SR.29

Economic and Social Council

Provisional

15 September 2008

Original: English

Substantive session of 2008
Operational activities segment

Provisional summary record of the 29th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 11 July 2008, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Mérorès ..... (Haiti)
later: Mr. Dapkiunas (Vice-President) ..... (Belarus)

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Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters (*continued*)

Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation (*continued*)

(a) Follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly and the Council (*continued*)

(b) Reports of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Food Programme (*continued*)

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08-41916 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters (*continued*)

Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission

1. **The President**, recalling the Council's decision of 20 June 2008, to extend the terms of office of its current members on the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission until 11 July 2008, so as to align them with those of the members elected by the General Assembly, said it was his understanding that, later that afternoon, the General Assembly would decide, as an interim measure, to further extend the terms of office of its current members on the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission until 31 December 2008. He suggested that the Council should also decide, as an interim measure, to further extend the terms of office of its current members on the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission until 31 December 2008. He also suggested that the Council should postpone its consideration of the draft resolution on membership of the Economic and Social Council in the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission (E/2008/L.7) to a later date.

2. *It was so decided.*

3. **The President**, said that the Council would elect by secret ballot one member to the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, as outlined in document E/2008/9/Add.14. He had also been advised that the Group of African States had endorsed candidates for the vacant seats on the Commission for Social Development, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, the Programme Coordinating Board of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the Committee for Programme and Coordination. He suggested that the relevant elections should be held the following week.

4. *It was so decided.*

5. *Mr. Dapkiunas (Belarus), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation (*continued*)

(a) Follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly and the Council (*continued*) (E/2008/46, E/2008/49, E/2008/60 and E/2008/83; E/2008/CRP.4)

(b) Reports of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Food Programme (*continued*) (E/2007/35; E/2008/5, E/2008/6 and Corr.1, E/2008/14, E/2008/34(Part I) and Add.1, and E/2008/36; E/2008/L.8)

6. **Mr. Blake** (Observer for Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the outcome of the operational activities segment should enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations system's response to the development needs and priorities of developing countries. To that end, the Council should provide clear and direct guidance for the full implementation of resolution 62/208 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system.

7. The Group of 77 and China attached great importance to resolution 62/208 and its comprehensive, effective and full implementation. The implementation of the resolution should fulfil the vision of a stronger United Nations role in advancing the development agenda and fully realizing the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and seek a broader and more expeditious realization of the global partnership for development. Coherent and coordinated system-wide actions, while necessary for implementation to be effective, must avoid a one size fits all approach. When providing guidance on implementation, the Council should bear in mind that resolution 62/208 also reaffirmed that the operational activities for development of the United Nations system should respond to the development needs of programme countries in a flexible manner and be carried out for the benefit of programme countries, at the request of those countries and in accordance with their own policies and priorities for development.

8. In addition to enhancing its implementation efforts, the United Nations system should promote national ownership and leadership of development

processes, enhance coordination with national governments and encourage greater participation of national authorities in the preparation and development of all United Nations system planning and programming documents. For resolution 62/208 to be implemented successfully, fundamental issues relating to the funding of operational activities for development must be addressed. The quantity, quality and predictability of development assistance was a central priority for developing countries and a prerequisite for effective development. Moreover, the growing imbalance between core and non-core resources must be addressed as a matter of urgency, since the shift from core to non-core funding caused fragmentation and might impair the effectiveness and efficiency of operational activities. The 2007 triennial comprehensive policy review should also be implemented strictly within the limits of the intergovernmental mandates contained therein.

9. Welcoming the Secretary-General's comprehensive report on the management process for the implementation of resolution 62/208 (E/2008/49), he drew attention to the Group's comments on the annex to that report. The Group also welcomed the Secretary-General's reports on the comprehensive statistical analysis of the financing of operational activities for development of the United Nations system for 2006 (E/2008/46) and on the functioning of the resident coordinator system, including costs and benefits (E/2008/60) and requested the United Nations system to take into account its views on the implementation of the General Assembly's policy guidance on operational activities.

10. The advancement of the United Nations development agenda depended on the full implementation of resolution 62/208, including through enhancement of the United Nations system's operational capacity to respond more broadly, effectively and efficiently to the needs and priorities of developing countries in support of their efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs.

11. **Mr. Delacroix** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro; and, in addition, Armenia, Moldova and Norway, said that resolution 62/208 was the continuation of a decades-long effort to improve coordination of United Nations activities for development and thereby better equip the system to respond to programme countries' needs and priorities and assist them in attaining the MDGs and building national capacity.

12. While the European Union recognized that the Secretary-General's report on the management process for the implementation of resolution 62/208 (E/2008/49) was the outcome of wide participation by, and extensive consultations with, the organizations of the United Nations development system and the inter-agency mechanisms, it felt that the management process set out in the report fell short of the resolution's request for clear guidelines, targets, benchmarks and time frames for implementation. The triennial comprehensive policy review was a unique tool that enabled the United Nations to manage and implement its activities for development in a coordinated manner. Any tool that facilitated the review's implementation must, therefore, be conceived in as operational a manner as possible and define the results to be achieved in a format that allowed for adequate monitoring and evaluation. The European Union hoped that the following year's report would meet that requirement.

13. Turning to the Secretary-General's report on the functioning of the resident coordinator system, including costs and benefits (E/2008/60), he welcomed the steps taken to strengthen the resident coordinator's responsibilities vis-à-vis the programme country, on the one hand, and the United Nations system, on the other, and the effort made by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to recruit country directors so as to strengthen the "firewall" between the activities carried out by the resident coordinator on behalf of the system as a whole and the operational activities of UNDP.

14. Such efforts must be pursued if the Organization's capacity to respond effectively to the needs of developing countries was to be strengthened and the resident coordinator system made more open and transparent. In particular, UNDP and the other entities concerned should finalize arrangements for the "firewall" and support the resident coordinator, so that he or she might fully perform his or her duties in helping the United Nations act in a united, effective and coherent manner in support of national strategies; mechanisms that encouraged resident coordinators and

country directors to give priority to achieving the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) goals should be promoted; recruitment should be diversified, training scaled up and awareness of non-resident agencies' activities raised, in order to promote country access to their services and strengthen the resident coordinator's legitimacy; codes of conduct and conflict resolution mechanisms should be established, in order to make country teams accountable and facilitate their work on the ground; results-based management should be consolidated, so as to facilitate evaluation of the implementation of UNDAF; and, lastly, administrative and management practices should be harmonized, so as to reduce transaction costs and generate savings which could then be used to finance development programmes. The European Union looked forward to the submission of the relevant reports.

15. Regarding the Secretary-General's report on the comprehensive statistical analysis of the financing of operational activities for development of the United Nations system for 2006 (E/2008/46), the European Union welcomed the work done by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to improve data collection and the reliability of financial data. For the first time, the report contained detailed data relating to contributions to the specialized agencies. Moreover, steps had been taken to harmonize contributions to the United Nations system. Such efforts should be pursued, particularly in view of the major differences in the way in which the United Nations and the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) defined, classified and reported contributions to the United Nations system.

16. **Ms. Marzetti** (United Kingdom), speaking also on behalf of Malawi, Mozambique, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Republic of Tanzania, said that the United Nations was a valuable development partner for both developing and donor countries. The Delivering as One initiative was the most promising effort thus far in terms of ensuring that the United Nations became more than the sum of its parts. A more coherent and effective United Nations that responded to host governments' priorities would be key to meeting the MDGs by 2015. For that reason, Malawi, Mozambique, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United Republic of Tanzania were working together to make the Delivering as One initiative a success. United Nations Headquarters should do its part to ensure that progress was made at the country level in the following areas.

17. First, Delivering as One was not a budget-cutting exercise; United Nations Headquarters should demonstrate how savings on administrative costs led to increased funding for development in the country where the savings were realized. Second, different rules, regulations, planning periods, reporting requirements, procurement systems and other business practices were hampering progress; United Nations Headquarters should rapidly resolve such problems. Third, a harmonized United Nations delivering as one at the country level required an empowered and strengthened resident coordinator; UNDP and other United Nations entities, including the specialized agencies, should rapidly resolve the so-called "firewall" issue. Fourth, no one size fitted all; United Nations Headquarters should allow the necessary innovation by decentralizing decision-making powers. Fifth, the United Nations should, to a much larger extent and wherever possible, align itself with and utilize national budgetary systems for such issues as resource reporting and procurement; United Nations Headquarters should encourage United Nations country teams to capitalize on such opportunities and utilize national execution to the maximum extent possible. Finally, the United Nations could not and should not do everything; priority setting in aligning with Government priorities should be pursued vigorously, complemented by untied, unconditional and predictable donor funding.

18. **Mr. Mérorès** (Haiti) said that the 2007 triennial comprehensive policy review had come at an auspicious time for Haiti; his Government hoped that the implementation of resolution 62/208 would significantly improve two aspects of field activities: the programme country's role and national capacity-building. That was all the more important given the fact that the operational segment was being held against the backdrop of strengthening existing instruments, implementing measures adopted at recent meetings and preparing future meetings.

19. National ownership and leadership of development programmes were currently at the heart of operational activities for development. The frequent references to national ownership in both resolution 62/208 and the Secretary-General's report on the management process for its implementation

(E/2008/49) demonstrated the urgent need to revamp the global partnership between the various development cooperation actors. In order for there to be national ownership, however, a State must have the capacity to implement the measures and attain the objectives set out in national development plans and strategies; that meant strong, viable national institutions. In the absence of such capacity, the United Nations should not simply fill the gap by carrying out those tasks itself, but rather design mechanisms and initiatives to help governments build such capacity. Capacity-building was a key component of operational activities for development.

20. His Government had recently completed its growth and poverty reduction strategy paper 2008-2010. An international conference on its implementation and financing would be held in Haiti shortly. The strategy paper was a major step towards the creation of a new style of partnership between the Haitian authorities and the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations. Such a partnership reflected the international community's long-term commitment to Haiti's development.

21. Referring to the report of the joint field visit to Haiti of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP) from 1 to 9 March 2008 (DP-FPA/2008/CRP.1-E/ICEF/2008/CRP.11), he said that there was poor coordination among the different United Nations field agencies with respect to management of international aid to Haiti. Furthermore, national capacity-building could hardly be said to be encouraged when over 70 per cent of official development assistance (ODA) to Haiti passed through NGOs on the ground and when United Nations agencies and NGOs themselves regularly poached the few qualified officials in Haiti's civil service.

22. Haiti expected a great deal, therefore, from the new management process for the implementation of resolution 62/208. His Government was particularly pleased that the era of "self-standing" assistance and a one size fits all approach was over. Operational activities for development would be more effective if deployed first and foremost in support of national plans. National ownership and well-designed national capacity-building plans would ensure that global efforts to promote poverty eradication, economic growth and sustainable development produced tangible results for developing countries.

23. **Mr. Ali** (Malaysia) observed that funding was one of the key issues raised in resolution 62/208 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development. The report of the Secretary-General on the management process for the implementation of that resolution (E/2008/49) did not adequately reflect strong concern expressed in section II of the resolution over the imbalance between core and non-core resources; nor did the report provide the concise assessment of progress made requested in the resolution (para. 28 (c)). His delegation did not agree with the contention in the report (para. 23) that the United Nations role was limited to advocacy and dialogue with donors. As the Development Cooperation Forum had just illustrated, the United Nations provided the broadest possible forum for discussions between Member States on problems such as the funding imbalance. Another report of the Secretary-General (E/2008/46) giving a comprehensive statistical financial analysis indicated a worrying trend: contributions to the United Nations system in 2006 had declined while those to non-United Nations multilateral bodies had increased substantially. The reasons had to be determined, but his delegation hoped that it was not because of greater donor sway in the multilateral bodies.

24. Regarding the improved functioning of the United Nations development system, some thought needed to be given to the role of the programme countries in evaluating the resident coordinators; and subsequent reports on the functioning of the resident coordinator system should outline some of the obstacles to the redistribution of savings from efficiencies directly into country programmes. The Secretary-General's current report on the subject (E/2008/60) should have more accurately reflected a number of issues raised during the discussions on system-wide coherence, such as establishing a clear separation between an individual's dual roles as Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, or evaluating the success of the delivering as one pilots. Lastly, there had to be some assessment of how the evaluation capacities of the programme countries had been developed (resolution 60/208, para. 139).

25. **Mr. Meñez** (Philippines) observed, from the perspective of a particular country's situation that

while the Philippines was classified as a middle-income developing country, over 80 million of its people still lived below the poverty line. The underlying causes of that poverty had been assessed, and the Government, as it sought to improve the lives of its citizens with United Nations assistance, had closely linked its medium-term development plan to United Nations goals and objectives.

26. However, UNDP programme expenditure for 2007 indicated that implementation in the field did not always measure up to the targets: in the Philippines, less than 80 per cent of the programme resource delivery target had been met and, at the same time, there had been a precipitous 75 per cent drop in non-core resource mobilization.

27. It should be borne in mind that the effects of globalization and interdependence applied also to the concerns of the Council. If there was still such a need for ODA, it was because, both nationally and internationally, there was an imbalance between policy and reality. The equitable functioning of free trade, which was to have been the engine for growth and development, had been stymied by the lack of progress on the Doha Round of negotiations, forcing countries to resort to bilateral, multilateral or regional arrangements that usually covered only certain areas of commerce and were not uniform. The Council's most vigorous efforts to carry out the sustainable development agenda needed to be matched by agreement in other global arenas on issues like trade, security or the environment.

28. **Mr. Petranto** (Indonesia) observed that resolution 62/208, which offered the guiding policy framework for United Nations operational activities for development, highlighted the need for effective delivery of assistance that made a clear impact on the capacity of the programme countries to pursue poverty eradication, sustained economic growth and sustainable development. The key to success was to ensure adequate, predictable financial resources that would further the development plans and programmes of the countries themselves, and it was therefore urgent to redress the imbalance between core and non-core funding.

29. The formidable global challenges in respect of food security and climate change were only additional hurdles for the developing countries as they endeavoured to meet internationally agreed development targets, including the MDGs. The operational activities of the United Nations system should be conducted in a time frame consistent with the time frame set for achieving the goals, and time frames should also be a component in the process of evaluating operational activities.

30. Effective operational activities should not restrict the ability of governments to determine their own priorities, select their own development partners or decide the nature of the relationship they wanted to have with United Nations development agencies. The annual reports on the resident coordinator system should regularly assess key factors such as coherence, participatory aspects and accountability.

31. Regarding the United Nations system contribution to national capacity development and development effectiveness, there had been progress especially in the areas of capacity-building, South-South cooperation, the transition from relief to development and gender equality and the empowerment of women. It would, however, have been interesting to have more information about the role the United Nations had played in South-South cooperation.

32. **Mr. Savostyanov** (Russian Federation) said that the operational development activities of the United Nations represented the international community's joint contribution to raising living standards in developing countries. Their success depended on scrupulous adherence to the applicable principles, to the fundamental decisions of the Member States and to a rational division of labour among the various components of the United Nations development apparatus. The Council played an essential role by coordinating and translating the decisions of the General Assembly into action by the funds and programmes on the ground. His delegation assured the Council that it would uphold the principles of universality, neutrality, multilateralism and non-politicization. However, national governments should retain the prerogative of choosing the parameters and priorities for collaboration with the United Nations system.

33. The organizations of the United Nations system and the Member States should fully and meticulously implement the General Assembly resolutions on the triennial comprehensive policy review, which provided a framework to direct and maintain the momentum of the reform and refinement of the mechanism.

Welcoming the contribution to transparency and accountability made by the first ever report of the Secretary-General on the functioning of the resident coordinator system (E/2008/60), his delegation hoped that its submission would become an annual exercise, and that it would be made more detailed and analytical. His delegation also recalled the emphasis in General Assembly resolution 62/208 on the need for resident coordinators to operate within a collegial country team.

34. The Russian Federation had played a part in overseeing the activities of the operational agencies concerned, and had been a beneficiary of their action. Its robust economic growth had enabled it to progress beyond the stage of entitlement to those agencies' assistance; when the current country programmes came to an end, it would be exclusively a donor.

35. **Mr. Liu** Zhenmin (People's Republic of China) said that the implementation of the goals set out in the triennial comprehensive policy review required a clear division of labour between all parts of the United Nations development system, and clearly defined responsibilities, so that Member States could assess progress and obstacles and provide timely policy guidance.

36. Resources had a fundamental bearing on the operation of the development system but the proportion of core resources had recently been declining annually. Programmes and funds consequently had to focus energy on competing for non-core resource contributions by satisfying donor requirements; that militated against the multilateralism, neutrality and grant nature of relief activities and undercut the monitoring and managerial functions of the governing bodies. Both the United Nations system and the donor community should move expeditiously to reverse that trend.

37. The United Nations should tailor its assistance to the needs and strategies of the developing countries, emphasize flexibility and avoid imposing a standard model. The resident coordinators should foster the principle of national ownership and follow the leadership of recipient governments in establishing more efficient country teams.

38. The lengthy process of building the capacity of developing countries was the core of development, and it must be regarded as a priority. Recipient governments should be allowed a greater coordinating role in the formulation of the UNDAF; the national execution model should be more widely disseminated; and greater use should be made of experts and expertise from the recipient countries. In addition, South-South cooperation held huge potential, which the United Nations development system should exploit by opening more funding channels, promoting it in innovative ways and providing greater backstopping.

39. **Mr. Chave** (Observer for Switzerland) said that the triennial comprehensive policy review had broken new ground in a number of areas: it emphasized United Nations help in building the capacity of partner governments and their institutions to implement their own development agendas; it redefined the accountability of the United Nations system vis-à-vis both the recipient countries and its own governance; it stressed the fundamental importance of core resources; it recognized the centrality of achieving programmatic coherence at the country level; it defined the role of the United Nations operational system in the context of current and new aid modalities; it unambiguously enhanced the contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment; and it advanced the agenda for cost-reduction and efficient delivery.

40. It was particularly encouraging that an orderly and well-functioning institutional architecture had been established, with the respective roles of the General Assembly, the Council and the various governing bodies of the United Nations system agencies clearly defined. The Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), having included the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) into its own structure as a third pillar, had focused on ways of implementing the triennial comprehensive policy review, thus demonstrating its respect for General Assembly guidance.

41. With regard to funding for operational activities, Switzerland was disappointed that the Secretary-General seemed to interpret his own role as mere advocacy and dialogue with donors. Indeed, the Secretary-General ought to launch an initiative in support of core funding at the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus to be held in Doha in the fall. Participation in such an initiative would of course be voluntary, based on peer pressure and public scrutiny, and on convincing results achieved by the United Nations system.

42. It was, in addition, crucial to endow the operational activities for development with a comprehensive, sustainable and consistent financial data and reporting system, as urged in paragraph 28 (a) and (b) of resolution 60/208, for such a system was needed for meaningful intergovernmental deliberation on funding. It was also of capital importance to move steadily towards harmonized business practices, one of the most practical ways of reducing the cost of development assistance and the enormous wastage involved in a non-unified database system.

43. **Mr. López** (Cuba) observed that cooperation for development should be provided at the request of the developing countries, on the basis of their national plans and strategies and should respond to their needs, priorities and specific conditions, without additional conditionalities. The overall policy guidance for United Nations operational activities was set out in resolution 62/208, which called for improved functioning of the United Nations development system, results-based management, and operational activities that were valued and assessed on the basis of their impact on the programme countries.

44. One should proceed with caution in establishing any link between the normative and operational work of the United Nations. United Nations norms were the result of an intergovernmental process and were applied universally, whereas the operational activities took place only in the developing countries. Under no circumstances did the United Nations system have a mandate to monitor universally applicable issues in the countries of the South, for that would introduce further conditionalities into the already weakened United Nations agenda for development, discount national priorities and allow donors to become instruments of political pressure on the beneficiary countries.

45. There was no one size fits all approach, and the governments themselves should determine the approach they wanted. The various agencies of the United Nations system should strive for greater coordination and coherence, to avoid duplication and maximize effectiveness and an efficient use of resources. At the same time, each individual body should retain its own identity, for there was no single model for system-wide coherence either. No one agency could claim all credit for the advances made in cooperation with the developing countries, or claim that its representatives were in a position to decide what the countries' priorities should be or, worse still, had the authority to mediate in the internal affairs of the developing countries. That would encourage donors to take an interventionist approach and significantly diminish the core resources for the international development agenda.

46. The urgent development challenges in the world were simply the reflection of the unjust international economic and political order that had become entrenched after decades of neo-liberalism. The rich countries, the obvious beneficiaries of the current system, must maintain their commitments and abandon policies that stood in the way of genuine cooperation with the United Nations system.

47. **Ms. Lisson** (Observer for Australia), speaking also on behalf of Canada and New Zealand (CANZ), expressed strong support for the operational activities of the United Nations development system. The CANZ delegations saw the triennial comprehensive policy review as critical in delivering a system that produced real, measurable and measured results in achieving country-owned and country-led development objectives. The report of the Secretary-General on the management process for the implementation of General Assembly resolution 62/208 (E/2008/49) provided a good starting point for implementing the triennial comprehensive policy review, such implementation being crucial for the effective coordination of efforts within the United Nations and the provision of efficient support for the achievement of the MDGs.

48. In order to optimize the effectiveness of the Council's monitoring of the implementation of the triennial comprehensive policy review and its provision of concrete guidance to the development system through its substantive sessions, the management plan also needed to be able to identify expected results and fine-tune targets, benchmarks, time frames and performance measurements since "what got measured, got done". The lack of a concrete and measurable results framework in the management process for the 2004 triennial comprehensive policy review had been a major shortcoming and one of the reasons why the resolution was not fully implemented. More quantitative analysis should be included in the implementation update for the Council's 2009 session, since the use of results-based management needed to be expanded in all operational activities. Full implementation of the triennial comprehensive policy review would be a key step in building on the growing momentum towards better system-wide coherence.

49. **Ms. Kharashun** (Belarus) said that her delegation supported the principle of national ownership and leadership of the development process, reaffirmed in the reports of the Secretary-General on the management process for the implementation of General Assembly resolution 62/208 (E/2008/49) and on the functioning of the resident coordinator system (E/2008/60). Similarly, the triennial comprehensive policy review confirmed that only governments should determine priorities for development cooperation activities with the United Nations system.

50. Contrary to the proposals of some States, resident coordinators should not play any kind of political role within a country, but rather focus on consolidating the efforts of the various United Nations system organizations and donors to attract resources to implement projects selected and approved by that country's government. The resident coordinator should not be given additional responsibilities, for example, the task of assessing the human rights situation or acting as an intermediary between political and social groups, as such efforts would detract from his or her assistance coordination duties and risk paralysing the local activities of United Nations system organizations.

51. In connection with the Delivering as One initiative, she recalled that the resident coordinator system was owned by the United Nations development system as a whole, and that its functioning should be participatory, collegial and accountable. The resident coordinators could not act effectively at country level unless appropriate coordination also took place at the intermediate and upper levels of management. As most of the countries involved in the Delivering as One pilots had noted, the current arrangements, consisting of the UNDG and CEB, were inadequate. Coordination and transparency could be improved by unifying financial frameworks, decision-making processes and methods of evaluation. The task of increasing the effectiveness of United Nations assistance was complicated by the fact that greater cooperation implied handing over some functions to the coordinating entity, raising the prospect of United Nations agencies becoming more uniform and therefore less specialized.

52. It would be unwise for the number of pilot countries to be increased or for reorganization of headquarters structures to be contemplated until a comprehensive analysis of the long-term outcomes of existing projects had taken place. Only with such a long-term view would it be possible to evaluate the operation of the country teams and thematic groups, the function of the resident coordinator and central coordination mechanisms. Finally, more accountability should be placed on the specialized agencies for the collection and supply of statistics regarding the funding of their operational activities.

53. **Mr. Mori** (Japan) said that his delegation hoped the United Nations system would be fully flexible, both at Headquarters and in the field, to meet the demands of people in need while keeping in mind current development modalities. To that end, Japan urged the Council to further encourage the wider Organization to take practical steps to accomplish its tasks, setting clear benchmarks and targets in accordance with General Assembly resolution 62/208. The urgency was particularly great given the emerging food and energy crises.

54. The resident coordinator system had a key role to play in improving the functioning of the United Nations development system. Given the disagreements evident in various forums on issues such as the evaluation process for the resident coordinator system and the capacity of those officials, his delegation would like the General Assembly, the Council and other relevant bodies to take immediate and concrete actions, with clear timelines, so that the wider Organization could improve its delivery of assistance on the ground.

55. **Mr. Tarragô** (Brazil) said his delegation firmly believed that rural development could be attained in developing countries. National comparative advantages should be fully explored to that end, enabling developing countries to achieve increased food and biofuel production consistent with food and energy security.

56. Referring to General Assembly resolution 62/208, he said that by outlining principles, actions, objectives and timelines for implementation of the resolution, the matrix management process constituted a road map for the United Nations specialized agencies, funds and programmes in their strategies to implement and monitor the triennial comprehensive policy review. It should therefore serve as the main reference for the reports of the Secretary-General in 2009 and 2010. It was, however, also important for developing countries to participate in evaluating the effectiveness of the triennial comprehensive policy review. Moreover, for

effective implementation of resolution 62/208, all United Nations specialized agencies, not just those of UNDG, needed to put into practice the guidance established.

57. Turning to the report of the Secretary-General on the functioning of the resident coordinator system, including costs and benefits (E/2008/60), he welcomed the suggestions put forward but considered that future reports should emphasize the need for the specialized agencies to engage in discussions with local governments and resident coordinators. The workplan for the resident coordinator system should include institutional strengthening at the local level to achieve better coordination in the respective countries, and coordination should not be one-sided but should allow recipient countries to voice their priorities and views regarding the role of the United Nations agencies, programmes and funds. The resident coordinator system should also monitor the local implementation of decisions by the General Assembly, the Council and the Secretary-General, seek to share common premises with other United Nations agencies and explore the potential of local in-kind contributions. If provided with the appropriate normative background and operational support, the resident coordinator system could become one of the leading actors in the United Nations reform process, particularly in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment.

58. **Mr. Sul** Kyung-hoon (Republic of Korea) said that the role of the funds, programmes and agencies of the United Nations development system was more important than ever in the light of current challenges and, against that backdrop, the operational activities segment provided a valuable opportunity for follow-up on the policy recommendations of the General Assembly.

59. Referring to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 62/208, he welcomed the efforts already made to incorporate the principle of national ownership and leadership into United Nations operational activities and encouraged the United Nations development organizations to further consolidate that process by fully aligning their operational activities with national development plans and utilizing national systems. The United Nations development system should also further improve its machinery in order to better respond to the needs of programme countries, while business practices should be simplified and harmonized at headquarters level. A well-functioning resident coordinator system would be a key element in the success of "Delivering as One" and, to that end, the system should be managed in a participatory and accountable way.

60. Noting that core resources were the bedrock of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system, he called on Member States to make every effort to increase the share of core resources in total funding. Since the current imbalance was due to more rapid growth of non-core contributions than core contributions, it was important first to analyse the reason for that discrepancy. He also welcomed the increase in contributions from non-Development-Assistance Committee sources for United Nations operational activities.

61. Lastly, the link between the normative and operational work of the United Nations still needed to be further strengthened, and the Council was ideally positioned to function as a bridge between those two areas.

62. **Mr. Lezona** (Congo), while welcoming the coherence of the guidance and recommendations given in the report of the Secretary-General on the management process for the implementation of General Assembly resolution 62/208, said that strict implementation would be required if the expected results were to be obtained, particularly since the achievement of the MDGs was looking more and more uncertain. Noting that the situation had been made worse by the decline in ODA, he called on development partners to honour their commitments in that regard.

63. While his delegation appreciated the support provided by the United Nations system for development initiatives, he wished to stress that it was important to tailor development assistance to the needs and priorities of the programme countries and to strengthen the coordination of development cooperation efforts. He particularly welcomed the new 2009-2013 cooperation programme between the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Congo, designed to assist the Congolese Government to achieve the MDGs, inter alia, through the implementation of its national poverty reduction strategy, and to guarantee children's rights to survival. In that connection, the Government, having adopted the Plan of Action for "A World Fit for Children", had

taken important practical steps to improve its policies and programmes for children. National capacity-building was also one of the key aims of the cooperation between the Congo and UNDP.

64. He urged the United Nations to continue exploring the opportunities for South-South cooperation, which was of great importance to the Congo in terms of its economic policies and investment priorities. His delegation also fully supported the principle that the transition from relief to development should be undertaken under national ownership. That had been the approach taken by the Congolese national authorities with regard to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants from 2001 onwards.

65. **Mr. Leuca** (Republic of Moldova) said that the Council's review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 62/208 provided a key opportunity to examine ways to strengthen the links between the normative work of the United Nations system and its operational activities, make further progress in overcoming systemic fragmentation and build on continuing reforms. The Republic of Moldova supported initiatives to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations development system and considered that, in order to strengthen its capacity to assist countries in achieving their development goals, its efficiency, coherence and impact must be further bolstered and its resources increased.

66. His delegation agreed that operational activities should be based on the national priorities, needs and requirements articulated in national frameworks and should promote the national ownership of development programmes. Capacity-building was vital as part of that process.

67. In the Republic of Moldova, the operational efficiency of individual funds, programmes and specialized agencies had been increased, and significant progress achieved in strengthening coordination and coherence. The first joint annual review of the synchronized UNDAF programme cycle showed that it was contributing to the achievement of the country's national development priorities. The United Nations system in the Republic of Moldova would, however, continue to promote greater simplification and harmonization between the Government and donors to reduce transaction costs, build national capacities, align donor activities with national priorities and improve results.

68. Adequate funding for operational activities remained essential; in that regard, the predictability and quality of funding, multi-year pledging, focus on core contributions and burden-sharing should be guiding principles. Lastly, his delegation believed that the resident coordinator system was a fundamental tool for ensuring country-level coherence and that greater power should be given to the resident coordinator to set strategic priorities and ensure the accountability of all participating agencies. The resident coordinator's role in ensuring the effective delivery of services in support of national priorities should also be further strengthened.

69. **Ms. Alzhanova** (Kazakhstan), recalling the recent visit of the Executive Board of UNDP to Kazakhstan in connection with its country programme outline, said that collaboration between the Government and United Nations agencies had resulted in much progress, despite problems, such as uneven levels of development, which also afflicted other countries. As the Administrator of UNDP had indicated to the Council, many opportunities to improve the effectiveness of United Nations system activities remained to be explored and exploited.

70. In her delegation's view, harmonization of programmes was best achieved through the resident coordinator system and UNDAFs. However, as relatively new mechanisms, they had experienced some delays, and doubts remained, chiefly about evaluation. Some Frameworks were fragmented, and should be aligned more closely with the priority needs of the country to which they applied. As government ministries sometimes complained that they had little idea of the expectations of United Nations agencies, thought might be given to arranging reciprocal traineeships for national civil servants and United Nations agency staff in order to promote greater understanding.

71. More attention should also be paid to assessing the risks involved in implementing the Frameworks, and to making appropriate adjustments. Perhaps, in the establishment of each Framework, fallback solutions should be contemplated to accommodate unforeseen circumstances. Clearly, no one-size-fits-all benchmarks of progress existed, but some standardization of benchmarks would be useful. One possibility was to

determine for each country a vulnerability coefficient, taking account of dependence on aid, market access, physical isolation or the effects of natural disasters. Such factors influenced States' abilities to achieve development goals.

72. The resident coordinator system, meanwhile, was not operating to its full potential. Instead of the current heavy dependence on UNDP, particularly for salaries, the United Nations agencies involved in development could contribute to a central fund to finance the resident coordinator post and coordination functions. Further decentralization would also remove the obstacles created by the present hierarchical system, which left resident coordinators unable to make decisions without referring to regional or central managers. The resulting saving in time would also represent a financial saving. Drawing on the experience of business, expenditure should be measured to compare the cost of equivalent activities in different locations and to avoid waste. The organizations of the United Nations system should also examine personnel costs to determine whether levels of staffing were appropriate to the scale of the programmes being implemented and whether there was potential for outsourcing.

73. **Mr. Heidt** (United States of America) said that the goal of the Member States should be to work with the organizations of the United Nations system to implement resolution 62/208 and improve programme delivery. The resident coordinator system played an essential role in implementation at the country level. Referring to the report of the Secretary-General on the functioning of the resident coordinator system (E/2008/60), he recalled resident coordinators' accountability to host governments through their reports to the national authorities on the results achieved by the United Nations country team, and their accountability to the governing bodies of United Nations agencies and to the Member States through UNDAF, the annual United Nations country team workplan and the country team performance appraisal system.

74. Because of their importance, the accountability mechanisms should be carefully adhered to and continuously monitored and improved. Perhaps the Secretary-General should supply the Council with a summary of the annual reports from resident coordinators to review and discuss each year. The summary should include information on the host countries' assessments of the country teams' activities and an assessment of the programme results and performance of each United Nations agency, based on the parameters contained in General Assembly resolution 62/208.

75. Another important objective of the resident coordinator system was to save costs. The scale of cost saving should increase as the scale of sharing of premises and services increased, enabling more resources to be ploughed back into national programmes. A cost and savings analysis should be included in reports to the Council. While a number of United Nations agencies, including the World Food Programme, had increased their participation in the resident coordinator system, UNDP remained the system's sole source of funding, which consumed 28 per cent of the core resources allocated to each country.

76. His delegation would like information on possible savings and cost-sharing with other participating agencies, whose involvement in the system made it more attuned to the range of needs of the programme countries and helped simplification and harmonization within the United Nations development structure. It looked forward to discussing the information provided for the Council in the conference room paper on actions taken by the executive boards and governing bodies of the United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies in the area of simplification and harmonization of the United Nations development system (E/2008/CRP.4).

77. **Mr. Rengifo** (Observer for Colombia), recalling that the 2005 World Summit Outcome had described the purpose of operational activities for development as being to help to eradicate poverty and promote sustained economic growth and sustainable development, within the context of the MDGs, said that the triennial comprehensive policy review provided the framework for improving United Nations system assistance to Member States, and for implementing their national development priorities and strategies.

78. The current session of the Council should establish guidelines for the policies established by the General Assembly in its recent resolution 62/208. In that connection, the report of the Secretary-General on the management process for the implementation of the resolution (E/2008/49) provided a useful point of departure, with practical recommendations to ensure

progress and provide for monitoring and evaluation of results.

79. Bearing in mind the ongoing development of that management process, his delegation urged improvement of national ownership, which was vital to the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of development. Although the resolution had already recognized governments' leadership role in connection with requesting and coordinating development cooperation in specific fields, with identifying development priorities and with preparing programme frameworks, clear guidelines, parameters and measures should apply to the strengthening of coordination between the United Nations system and national Governments, particularly with respect to the transition from relief to development.

80. The United Nations was a driving force behind South-South cooperation, including triangular cooperation, especially under the leadership of the UNDP Special Unit for South-South Cooperation. However, steps should be taken to ensure that the Special Unit had the resources to implement its mandate in accordance with paragraph 53 of the resolution. While the annex to the report made reference to that consideration, it failed to suggest specific action. Specific action should also be established to support the development efforts of middle-income countries. Once again, while the annex to the report referred to that matter, it contained no practical recommendations, leaving it out of step with the requirements of paragraph 27 of the resolution.

81. **Mr. Benfreha** (Algeria) said that it must not be forgotten that the 2005 World Summit Outcome had enshrined development as one of the pillars of the United Nations system. Starting from its position of comparative advantage, the United Nations system could build the capacity of developing countries to achieve their priority goals, and therefore to implement their own national policies and the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs. Developing countries needed United Nations assistance to cope with development challenges and achieve lasting growth, primarily by reinforcing national development authorities. To optimize United Nations development activities, developing countries should have the best possible access to the opportunities available in the United Nations system.

82. The funds, programmes and specialized agencies should ensure full implementation of General Assembly resolution 62/208. Much had already been achieved, but more effort was needed. Operational activities for development should be based on national priorities themselves derived from national development strategies and plans. National ownership should be promoted by involving local entities in the implementation of development projects and programmes. The resident coordinator system had made progress, but United Nations bodies should improve their cooperation to coordinate their activities better, and should submit regular analytical reports.

83. The downward trend in the resources of the funds, programmes and specialized agencies should be examined to try to achieve a level of financing which was commensurate with the mandates of the bodies of the United Nations system and also predictable and compatible with the requirement that operational activities for development should be universal and neutral. His delegation supported raising the profile of South-South cooperation, which should become an integral part of the activities concerned. Support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development should also be improved by increasing its integration with other programmes in the United Nations system.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.

United Nations E/2008/SR.30

Economic and Social Council

Provisional
25 September 2008

Original: English

Substantive session of 2008
Humanitarian affairs segment

Provisional summary record of the 30th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 15 July 2008, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Park In-kook (Vice-President) ..... (Republic of Korea)

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Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance

Corrections to this record should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of this document* to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza.

08-42308 (E)

In the absence of Mr. Mérorès (Haiti), Mr. Park In-kook (Republic of Korea), Vice-President, took the chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance (E/2008/71 and E/2008/80)

1. **The President** said that the humanitarian affairs segment, organized around the theme of "building capabilities and capacities at all levels for timely humanitarian assistance, including disaster risk reduction", offered an opportunity for the Council, joined by the international humanitarian community, to discuss how best to respond to the growing humanitarian implications of the current food security crisis and of natural disasters. Member States would be able to reiterate their commitment to upholding the principles of United Nations humanitarian action — humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence — and to reaffirm their responsibility for their citizens' well-being. They should be prepared to face increasingly complex emergencies that disregarded national boundaries, but also to allow and facilitate humanitarian aid and support from regional and international partners.

2. **Mr. Holmes** (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator) recalled that, when speaking to the Council in 2007, he had predicted an increase in disasters associated with natural hazards that reflected the impact of climate change. That prediction had proven correct; in the past year, natural disasters had been 90 per cent more frequent than in 1987. The many victims of the Sichuan earthquake had received rapid assistance, largely thanks to early national intervention, while the situation of the victims of Cyclone Nargis had been more complicated; an effective assistance operation had been put in place, but only after avoidable delays in access for international humanitarian staff and assets. The impact of natural disasters, while heaviest in Asia, had also been felt in Africa and Latin America, reinforcing the importance of early warning, disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction measures. A priority in both Myanmar and China should be "building back better" with disaster risk reduction in mind.

3. The complex emergencies of 2008 had included the challenges of providing humanitarian assistance and protecting civilians. Because of long-running conflict, displacement and deprivation had befallen millions in Darfur, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Chad, the Central African Republic, Gaza and Iraq. The demand for humanitarian assistance would continue to increase as a result of those continuing problems, combined with the greater incidence and severity of natural disasters and the global food crisis. The international community should be prepared to look for new sources of financial support in response to that demand.

4. In recent years, there had been much emphasis on reminding State and non-State actors, as well as humanitarian partners, of the principles of United Nations humanitarian action so that humanitarian workers could reach populations in need properly and in time and vulnerable populations could receive life-saving assistance. Humanitarian workers were still viewed with suspicion in many places and prevented from reaching those in need by bureaucratic hurdles and safety and security challenges, including deliberate attacks. A recent example was the murder of Mr. Ali Osman Ahmed, head of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) office in Mogadishu.

5. Humanitarian workers' efforts were wasted when personnel, equipment and supplies could not be delivered. In the recent past, insecurity had affected the delivery of aid in Afghanistan, Darfur, Iraq and Somalia. The international community should condemn increased attacks on humanitarian workers and make their safety and security a priority. With reliance on national staff becoming more common in some situations, their loss might be seen as less significant than that of international staff, who attracted more media attention. There must be no double standard in that regard.

6. While the challenges of providing humanitarian assistance were increasing, so too was the number of vulnerable populations. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had reported an increase in the global refugee population to 11.4 million, and the figure used in forecasting the needs of individuals displaced by violent conflict had reached 26 million in 2008; further millions had been displaced by natural disasters. Humanitarian emergencies were becoming more serious because the increase in food prices had led to a global food crisis that affected not just fragile States, but those previously considered to be in a stable

situation. As always, the poorest and most vulnerable were the first and most seriously affected. With 800 million people currently hungry, the World Bank predicted at least a further 100 million victims. A joint appeal for US$ 404 million for Afghanistan and for US$ 325 million for Ethiopia had been launched.

7. For the sake of a sustainable solution, the international community must provide an immediate, unified response to both the immediate humanitarian needs and the longer-term structural issues that hindered food production. The Secretary-General's High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis was an important framework for unifying policy within the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions and ensuring comprehensive, coordinated action to help national Governments, protect the most vulnerable from hunger and starvation and promote sustained investment to correct the long-standing neglect of agriculture and rural development. All actors and stakeholders — governments, civil society, the private sector and regional organizations — knew what efforts were needed and should ensure that they were made. However, not only were food assistance needs dramatically rising, so too were the costs of meeting those needs. Additional resources must be found — for example, to assist the World Food Programme (WFP) — but other steps could also be taken, such as exempting humanitarian food purchases from the export restrictions or taxes imposed by some countries.

8. Climate change had humanitarian implications. Rising sea levels could affect nearly 634 million people, and increasingly frequent storms, floods and drought were harming the livelihoods of millions; alterations in disease patterns caused by increased flooding could lead to higher rates of waterborne illnesses; and while rising temperatures were increasing the likelihood and range of malaria epidemics in Africa. Climatic extremes could worsen struggles for the control of limited resources, leading to more intense conflicts, population displacement and refugees fleeing areas affected by climatic phenomena.

9. The Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Poznań in December 2008, was a potential milestone in advancing climate change negotiations and promoting synergies between the humanitarian and climate change communities. Strengthening disaster risk reduction and implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action should provide key policy guidance.

10. The international humanitarian community had been working for some time to improve its ability to address mounting and interdependent humanitarian response needs, including by launching a programme to improve preparedness, country-level leadership and accountability in 2005. Through a cluster approach that designated thematic lead agencies at the global and field levels for areas that had previously lacked clear leadership, response gaps were being addressed. That approach was a better way to organize the international response in each key sector and to work with national governments, the first and most important responders to any crisis; in the previous year, it had been implemented in 14 new countries.

11. Effective programming was possible only with flexible, equitable funding of humanitarian activities. Funding should be disbursed in a more prioritized and targeted manner, based on humanitarian needs. The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) had received solid support from over 90 State donors. While the recently conducted independent evaluation of the Fund had indicated considerable progress towards its principal objective of speeding up response to sudden-onset emergencies, it had also indicated ways to improve the functioning and effectiveness of that key humanitarian financing tool.

12. At the country level, CERF and the Common Humanitarian Funds allowed better channelling of financing towards neglected sectors in various emergencies. Further efforts to prioritize the allocation of resources, were complemented by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs initiative, mandated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, to support the development of a global needs assessment framework.

13. Governments and humanitarian organizations must work together to build a response system able to address the needs of millions; national and local capacity-building, early warning, contingency planning and preparedness remained key priorities. Humanitarian action, driven by a clear moral imperative, must not conceal any political or other agenda. Host governments bore the primary responsibility for the safety and security of humanitarian personnel on their territories and must do

more to prosecute the perpetrators of violence against aid workers and their activities and programmes.

14. **Mr. Hunte** (Observer for Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the countries of the Group had experienced frequent humanitarian emergencies and supported a strong, timely and coordinated response; a single disaster could set back a developing country by several decades. Affected States, donor countries, the United Nations system and other humanitarian organizations should work together to provide humanitarian assistance and support for development, while recognizing the primary role of the affected State.

15. The United Nations system and the international community played a unique role in enhancing developing countries' existing humanitarian capacities and institutions, by promoting access to and transfer of new technology, funding and expertise in order to improve preparedness, respond rapidly to natural disasters and mitigate their impact, address the long-term challenges of recovery and reduce future risks.

16. While States bore the primary responsibility for caring for the victims of humanitarian emergencies within their borders, the magnitude and duration of such events often surpassed their response capacities. A strong commitment to addressing the special needs of those disproportionately affected by emergencies, including armed conflict, must be made. Civilian victims, especially women, children and other vulnerable individuals, were often deprived of resources and suffered human rights violations and atrocities. Empowering those groups and mainstreaming gender considerations helped their situation and contributed to conflict resolution.

17. Humanitarian operations, particularly in the case of complex emergencies, could not succeed without access to those requiring assistance. In accordance with the relevant provisions of national and international law and international humanitarian law, safe and unhindered access should be provided for the humanitarian personnel of the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies and organizations working with the consent of the affected State.

18. The primary role of the affected State in the initiation, organization, coordination and implementation of humanitarian assistance within its territory should be respected, as should the guiding principles contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 46/182 on strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations. States should respect fully their obligations under the relevant international instruments, including the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, and should meet their obligation under international humanitarian law, in particular the 1949 Geneva Conventions, to protect and assist civilians in occupied territories.

19. Recognizing the clear relationship between relief, rehabilitation and development, the Group believed that humanitarian assistance should be provided in a manner which supported recovery and long-term development and with the requisite coordination between humanitarian and development actors. However, assistance must not be seen as a substitute for international development cooperation. More attention should be paid to resources, particularly in the case of underfunded emergencies, and to the role of financial institutions during the post-disaster recovery phase. The Group looked forward to examining the outcome of the independent evaluation of CERF during the sixty-third session of the General Assembly.

20. **Mr. Ripert** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro; and, in addition, Armenia and the Republic of Moldova, reiterated the European Union's support for the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and for the office's role as global coordinator of international humanitarian assistance.

21. In view of the increasing frequency and severity of humanitarian emergencies in recent years, respect for humanitarian principles was more important than ever. The European Union was committed to maintaining and promoting the fundamental principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence and agreed that access was a prerequisite for humanitarian operations; international humanitarian law and the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions obliged all parties to facilitate the safe passage of relief consignments in a rapid manner.

22. The European Union was extremely concerned by the restrictions placed on humanitarian workers, which ranged from deliberate attacks and harassment to crossing-point closures and administrative obstacles and demonstrated a complete disregard for humanitarian principles, and urged Governments to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian personnel within their territory. It commended the Organization on its efforts to further increase capacity and was particularly pleased that coordination in the field had been strengthened through the cluster approach. Given the convergence of views on those issues between the European Union and the Group of 77 and China, he was confident that negotiations on that part of the humanitarian affairs segment's outcome document could be concluded without difficulty.

23. As the main provider of humanitarian assistance worldwide, the European Union supported the various funding mechanisms that had been established, namely the Consolidated Appeal Process and flash appeals, the common humanitarian funds and emergency response funds at the field level, and CERF at the global level. It welcomed the contributions made to CERF thus far and, collectively, hoped to meet its target of $500 million.

24. Another way to ensure more effective humanitarian response was through better civil-military cooperation. As noted in the Secretary-General's report (E/2008/71, para. 53), a lack of coordination during the deployment of military assets might compromise the affected country's ability to use those assets effectively. Moreover, the freedom of movement of humanitarian assistance was sometimes restricted when military and humanitarian personnel worked together without proper coordination. OCHA could play a vital coordination role in that respect by improving the ability of resident and humanitarian coordinators to assist Governments in determining whether military assets were needed and, if so, how they could be used most effectively. The European Union fully respected the Oslo Guidelines and the guidelines on the use of military and civil defence assets to support United Nations humanitarian activities in complex emergencies.

25. The European Union was extremely concerned by the increase in sexual violence in emergencies, and welcomed the coalition "United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Crisis". Urgent steps must be taken to prevent sexual violence, scale up support to victims and combat impunity. In that regard, he called for effective implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and welcomed the adoption of resolution 1820 (2008).

26. **Mr. Yoseph** (Observer for Ethiopia), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, welcomed the fact that the report of the Secretary-General (E/2008/71) focused on two issues of concern: the humanitarian implications of climate change and the humanitarian challenges of the global food crisis. Climate change was a major factor in soaring food and fuel prices, which in turn exacerbated global food insecurity. In the past year alone, most regions had experienced multiple natural disasters. Serious disasters such as the China earthquake and the Myanmar cyclone demonstrated the need for all parties to assess their humanitarian assistance capacity. He commended OCHA, United Nations agencies, donor countries and humanitarian partners on their efforts in responding to challenges and providing assistance to people in need.

27. In Africa, unprecedented rainfall had caused some of the worst and most widespread flooding in the continent's history, killing over 200 people, displacing over 600,000 and affecting millions. Africa did not have the capacity or resources to reduce the impact of such calamities and make a speedy recovery; effective humanitarian interventions were essential. The Group agreed that there was an urgent need to increase investment in disaster risk reduction and preparedness in high-risk settings and to mobilize support for addressing the humanitarian impacts of climate change, but that support must also be given to Member States so that they could improve their own disaster preparedness capacity.

28. The international community had responded generously to the World Food Programme (WFP) appeal for special funds to mitigate the impact of the global food crisis; more resources needed to be mobilized, however, as the most vulnerable developing countries might well experience a severe reduction in food aid. He hoped that the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis would address that situation and find an appropriate response.

29. Sufficient and flexible funding was critical if humanitarian needs were to be met effectively. In that regard, the United Nations and donor effort to establish common humanitarian funds in Africa should be

pursued and contributions to that and other funding mechanisms should be strengthened in order to ensure predictable, timely and needs-based access to resources and an effective response to global humanitarian challenges.

30. **Mr. Abdelrahman** (Sudan) said that his country had many years' experience in humanitarian coordination, including through Operation Lifeline Sudan, the coordination mechanism on droughts and floods and, most recently, the Darfur coordination mechanism. He commended donors, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for their efforts in Darfur and strongly condemned the recent killings of humanitarian workers by rebels. His Government's efforts were reflected in the fact that mortality and malnutrition rates in Darfur were well below critical and 500,000 refugees and internally displaced persons had returned home. The main concern at present was the situation in the refugee camps.

31. Under a programme established following the adoption of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, 2.5 million refugees and internally displaced persons had returned to their homes in the south of the country. Unfortunately, they did not always find the basic services they expected on arrival; three years after the adoption of that Agreement, donors had still not met their commitment in that regard.

32. His Government had established a mechanism whereby humanitarian convoys were provided with armed escorts; since April 2008, 45,000 tons of goods per month had been transported in that manner. With regard to the joint United Nations/African Union mechanism for verifying and investigating rape claims, he was pleased to report that since January 2008, there had been no reports of rape in Darfur. Thus, his Government was doing its part and cooperating well with the United Nations agencies on the ground. As part of such cooperation, the capacities of national institutions, NGOs and civil society should be strengthened. Almost half the NGOs and three quarters of the humanitarian workers operating in the country were Sudanese, yet only a small percentage of the humanitarian resources received was allocated to national institutions.

33. Many presidential decrees had been issued with a view to the facilitation of humanitarian assistance. Assistance to Darfur was provided through a fast-track system. His Government was currently offering training to local authorities and NGOs, United Nations agencies and other partners on the ground in order to ensure that its policies were implemented properly; coordination with the United Nations was particularly important.

34. **Mr. Lenz** (Observer for Switzerland) said that Switzerland attached great importance to strengthening the architecture for discussion of humanitarian issues within the United Nations. The segment's outcome document should focus on specific issues and provide appropriate policy guidance. The recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report (E/2008/71) should guide the Council in that regard. Issues relating to the more general framework of humanitarian action should be discussed in the context of the relevant General Assembly resolutions.

35. The usefulness of thematic planning in the Council's work had been demonstrated by its treatment of the issue of foreign military assets in disaster relief. His delegation welcomed the results of the independent study mentioned in paragraph 5 of the report and looked forward to discussing the issue further at the side event scheduled later that week. He noted with concern the incomplete implementation of the Oslo Guidelines, the dissemination and implementation of which were more important than ever.

36. He encouraged all organizations participating in the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis to continue to support the efforts of the Governments concerned. The global dimension of the crisis called for multisectoral programmes based on, and adapted to, specific needs.

37. His delegation agreed that humanitarian assistance should be needs-based; indeed, that was the real meaning of neutrality. Needs assessments should also be integrated into local and national plans to build preparedness for response in line with priority five of the Hyogo Framework for Action. Efforts to strengthen emergency response capacity must also include voluntary measures to improve humanitarian operations; in 2007, the Swiss Federal Administration's humanitarian rapid response team had received International Organization for Standardization (ISO) certification.

38. For many years, Switzerland had participated in efforts to solve problems relating to access in situations of armed conflict. Recently, it had organized a meeting

of experts aimed at facilitating an exchange of experience and views between government, civilian and military representatives and humanitarian organizations. One of the meeting's main aims had been to identify obstacles encountered on the ground; participants had also discussed the nature and extent of State consent to grant access to humanitarian organizations. The exact nature of follow-up to that event had not yet been determined.

39. Lastly, he acknowledged the considerable efforts to reform the Organization's humanitarian system, particularly by strengthening the resident and humanitarian coordinator system. OCHA should rely more on the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations; it would then be able to concentrate on its core functions.

40. **Mr. Davide** (Philippines) said that in the 10 years that had passed since the establishment of OCHA and the Council's first humanitarian affairs segment, the United Nations had provided an integrated response to complex emergencies involving many stakeholders, recognizing that each emergency had its own unique demands and sensitivities. It had established the CERF and drawn up policy guidance on, inter alia, the protection of civilians in armed conflict and the negotiation of humanitarian principles and access.

41. Much more could be done, however, to help countries prevent tragedies from escalating into emergency situations. United Nations resources could be used to mitigate the impact of natural and man-made disasters by helping States establish systems and procedures and build national capacity for providing immediate assistance. The coordinating capacity of the United Nations would be required in order to encourage developed countries and development partners to provide training and technology transfer. Enabling countries to prevent or minimize the impact of disasters and provide immediate assistance might also prevent donor fatigue.

42. Climate change had the greatest impact not on developed countries — which were primarily responsible for the problem — but on developing countries. Developed countries and development partners must find ways to help affected countries help themselves.

43. The international community's current strategy for tackling the global food crisis provided a good model. The Comprehensive Framework for Action developed by the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis provided clear strategies for addressing the issue and should be strongly endorsed by the Council in the outcome document of the segment. His delegation hoped that the next 10 years would see more independent action by affected countries and more focused interventions by the United Nations.

44. **Mr. Shinyo** (Japan) expressed concern at the frequency with which major natural disasters were hitting Asia. Member States should ask themselves whether the international response was effective, whether the Organization was addressing all the issues that such disasters raised and how best to reform the United Nations system to that end. He therefore welcomed the agreement reached on the humanitarian cluster of the mandate review process; humanitarian reform must be promoted vigorously by improving the humanitarian coordinator system, the cluster approach and the CERF.

45. Japan had long stressed the importance of disaster preparedness and risk reduction. While the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was to be commended for its leading role in responding to the humanitarian emergency caused by the Myanmar cyclone, the region would benefit even more if regional organizations promoted preventive measures as well. In May 2008, his Government had announced its intention to promote cooperation on disaster preparedness and risk reduction; in June 2008, Japan, China and the Republic of Korea had agreed to promote such cooperation; and Japan, the United States and Australia had agreed to strengthen cooperation and enhance emergency response capacity in the Asia-Pacific region.

46. Japan's centuries of experience in dealing with natural hazards had enabled it to develop risk reduction technology, which could be drawn upon to strengthen the international community's response capacity and used by the recently established Hyogo Office of the Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR).

47. The international community needed to promote climate change adaptation and strengthen early warning mechanisms. Japan would provide some $10 billion in assistance under its Cool Earth Promotion Programme and had initiated cooperation with over 20 countries.

48. His delegation was pleased that the role of disaster risk reduction as an essential element in climate change adaptation was reflected in the segment's draft outcome document. In the Hokkaido Toyako Summit Leaders Declaration, adopted the previous week, the members of the Group of Eight had expressed their determination to adopt, with all parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the goal of reducing global emissions by at least 50 per cent by 2050. In a statement on global food security made at that Summit, the Group of Eight had announced that, they were addressing the urgent needs of the most vulnerable people in the short-term; affirmed that it was imperative to remove export restrictions and expedite current World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations aimed at introducing stricter disciplines on trade actions which prolonged and aggravated the situation and hindered humanitarian purchases of food commodities; and commended the leadership of the United Nations and Bretton Woods institutions in convening the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis to establish the Comprehensive Framework for Action.

49. His delegation welcomed the independent study on the use of foreign military assets in disaster relief and took note of the conclusions and recommendations contained therein.

50. Lastly, he commended all humanitarian personnel for their selflessness and dedication in carrying out their responsibilities under difficult conditions and offered condolences to the families of those who had lost their lives or suffered grievous harm in the course of humanitarian operations. He welcomed the report of the Independent Panel on Safety and Security of United Nations Personnel and Premises and requested the Secretary-General to implement the recommendations contained therein.

51. **Mr. Abdi** (Indonesia) observed that the conjunction of the global economic downturn and natural and man-made disasters made the timely provision of humanitarian assistance essential. There was still room for improvement in the areas of coordination, effectiveness and building stronger partnerships.

52. Humanitarian assistance should be provided only with the consent of the affected country. However, most developing countries lacked the capacity to provide timely relief to their populations or to manage the subsequent recovery and must be helped to develop disaster preparedness plans in line with the risk reduction priorities of the Hyogo Framework for Action. Indonesia had been the nation hardest hit by the 2004 tsunami. In the aftermath of the 2006 earthquakes and, with support from the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), it had helped prepare its local governments by developing wide-ranging, interdisciplinary risk reduction plans adapted to local conditions in the hope that a decentralized policy would provide quicker and more effective assistance when disaster struck.

53. Every government should conduct an evaluation of its post-disaster recovery in order to demonstrate its accountability and transparency. Donors, the United Nations system and the international community could then help it build back better and resume long-term development. In addition to natural disasters, complex hazards caused by man and nature, such as the recent food crisis, might have been prevented had there been an early warning system on food security, or climate change. Continued support for the humanitarian assistance provided by the United Nations system, from relief to development, was of the utmost importance if all the internationally agreed development goals were to be fulfilled.

54. **Ms. Norton** (Canada), said that in the past year, international humanitarian action had brought hope and relief to millions worldwide and better coordination had made for more timely response. There had been agency reforms and a growing recognition of the importance of disaster risk reduction and preparedness pursuant to the Hyogo Framework for Action. Yet there were also many continuing challenges. Full, safe and unhindered access to those in need remained the critical challenge and a fundamental principle of international humanitarian action, yet it was too often an elusive goal, as in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis or Zimbabwe. The safety of humanitarian workers was increasingly at risk, and Member States had a responsibility to prosecute those responsible for attacks on them. The current food crisis was also affecting the collective capacity to meet the needs of populations. Canada was therefore providing $230 million for food aid in 2008/2009 and was untying its entire food aid budget and opening it to international procurement, especially from developing countries allowing

commodities to be purchased more cheaply locally and regionally.

55. The cluster approach had created a stronger spirit of cooperation among everyone involved in humanitarian work, helped identify gaps in response capacity, made it easier to share information, defined centres of accountability and enabled more effective advocacy. Where performance had lagged — as in the early recovery and protection clusters — OCHA should address the problems involved. That Office was to be applauded for its good management of CERF, to which Canada had pledged over $190 million. An independent evaluation had shown the Fund's effectiveness in saving lives during emergencies.

56. Experienced leaders and coordinators were needed and it should be a priority to strengthen the selection, capacity and central role of the humanitarian coordinators. In light of the political will and the resources available, the Council had an important opportunity to improve the way the humanitarian system functioned.

57. **Mr. Nebenzya** (Russian Federation) said that in the face of increased demand, the humanitarian community should adhere to the guiding principles established by the General Assembly in its resolution 46/182 on strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations, which sought to preserve its non-political character; any attempt to undertake humanitarian action without adhering to the resolution would politicize and harm international consensus on the issue.

58. Priority should be given to strengthening disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels, the fifth of the priorities for action established at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, held in Hyogo in 2005. Close attention should also be paid to the global food crisis by addressing its causes and taking preventive action. The convening of a special meeting of the General Assembly on the global food and energy crisis and of the High-Level Conference on World Food Security had been a positive step; the Council, too, should pay close attention to topical humanitarian issues, taking care to adhere to all official procedures.

59. Welcoming CERF and the recent independent evaluation of the Fund, his delegation called for improvement of the mechanisms for mobilizing resources for humanitarian action through a wider donor base and an emphasis on consolidated appeals. OCHA should continue to maximize the potential of the humanitarian coordinators and to improve capacity, predictability and accountability in the delivery of assistance.

60. **Mr. Hagen** (United States of America) said that the impartiality, humanity, neutrality and independence of any humanitarian operation were fundamental to its success, as was unimpeded access to populations in need, since critical assistance administered rapidly had the potential to minimize suffering and loss of life. The deliberate obstruction of life-saving assistance through military, political, bureaucratic or any other means was unacceptable.

61. The Secretary-General's report (E/2008/71) outlined a series of challenges and emphasized the humanitarian implications of climate change. His Government recognized the seriousness of that problem and the importance of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, enhancing energy security and promoting sustainable development. However, it believed that it was not possible to link specific natural disasters to climate change alone and that to do so detracted from an effective response to catastrophic circumstances. Equal attention must be payed to non-climate-related disasters such as the recent earthquake in China and the complex emergency in Darfur. Moreover, weather extremes depended not only on changes in climate, but also on alterations in ecosystems and on the societal, physical and economic vulnerability of populations.

62. A further challenge to humanitarian assistance outlined in the Secretary-General's report was the global food crisis. Many factors contributed to higher food prices: rising fuel and transportation costs, poor harvests, export restrictions, unprecedented though welcome economic growth and the associated increase in the demand for food worldwide. Biofuel production was only one such factor, and through significant investment in research and development of new technologies, the United States was working to ensure that it did not lead to environmental and food security problems.

63. Overcoming the global food crisis would require both immediate emergency assistance and long-term action. The United States was pursuing an integrated, three-pronged strategy: targeting vulnerable countries, assisting countries capable of rapidly increasing their

staple food production and supporting trade liberalization and the use of advanced agricultural technologies. It encouraged other governments to conclude an ambitious agreement, during the Doha Round of trade negotiations, that would increase market access for agricultural products and reduce trade-distorting subsidies. Governments should also lift restrictions on agricultural exports, expand research, promote science-based regulation and encourage the adoption of innovative technologies, including biotechnology.

64. **Mr. Jahan** (Observer for Bangladesh) noted that nine out of 10 recent disasters had been weather-related, a fact which pointed to climate change as the force behind their severity. The humanitarian implications were significant: research had to be done to provide a better understanding of climate change, and there had to be more investment in risk reduction and preparedness in countries vulnerable to disasters, especially low-lying coastal States. The global food crisis also posed a humanitarian challenge in the short, medium and long term, and the United Nations system must act quickly to assess the needs of the most vulnerable peoples and put in place a comprehensive strategy.

65. Building resilience in the face of natural disasters through national, regional and global action, was critically important. Humanitarian assistance should follow the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality. Predictable humanitarian financing that used flexible, multi-year mechanisms was vital and assistance must be distributed equitably where it was most needed.

66. The development of a stronger standing response capacity, more responsible leadership, more effective delivery of aid and improved coordination would produce better results. The establishment of CERF, a landmark United Nations initiative, would lead to faster, more predictable and needs-based humanitarian assistance in sudden-onset and underfunded crises. The Fund had already proven its usefulness in many parts of the world, including his own country, and deserved to be adequately funded over and above the existing humanitarian contributions.

67. His own country faced natural disasters with relentless regularity. Accordingly, the Government had shifted from the conventional response-and-relief approach to a more comprehensive risk reduction culture. Bangladesh had been one of the first countries to create a national body to oversee risk reduction as a component of its disaster management programme. Its experience had demonstrated that timely and coordinated intervention could significantly minimize the impact of a disaster. Nevertheless, in order to mitigate the havoc wreaked, it was imperative to build global partnerships and cooperation.

68. **Mr. Ali** (Malaysia) said that the number of deliberate attacks on humanitarian workers had reached unacceptable levels. The problem had been exacerbated by misperceptions of their role owing to increasing integration of military with civilian workers in humanitarian missions. It also had to be determined whether, in some situations, humanitarian workers actually did more than humanitarian work, exposing themselves to attacks, or whether the attacks were part of a strategy used by one party to a conflict in order to destroy another.

69. He questioned the usefulness of the plethora of documents, strategies and guidelines being produced with a view to ensuring respect for humanitarian principles when the situation on the ground was so complex and the propriety of using humanitarian action to promote ideas — the "responsibility to protect", for instance — on which there was no consensus.

70. The convergence of the food, fuel and climate change challenges was another issue that needed to be faced squarely. In light of the evidence that climate change would lead to predictable, escalating humanitarian crises, preventive adaptation measures needed to be put in place. The adaptation issue, which required the Council to promote coherent and integrated national efforts, should have been given more attention in the Secretary-General's report.

71. The Council was also a key advocate for the assistance that the developing world needed, not for lack of will on the part of governments but because of their inability to satisfy competing interests arising from the convergence of crises. All democratic societies faced that situation, but the wealthier ones were in a better position to do so. At the same time, thought needed to be given to the multiplier effect of the food and fuel crises on hitherto stable countries that had also become key transit countries for humanitarian aid.

72. **Mr. Strigelsky** (Belarus) said that as a donor of international humanitarian assistance, Belarus had been

involved in operations in China, Iran, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in the past two years and the rescue services of its Ministry of Emergency Situations had been active in areas affected by natural disasters in members of the Commonwealth of Independent States. His delegation called for greater coordination of humanitarian activity among States, United Nations bodies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), aiming for the greatest possible centralization of structures for raising funds and attracting material resources for humanitarian assistance in the interests of promoting rational use of such resources; facilitating considered decisions, particularly in the context of long-term country projects; and avoiding politicization. The United Nations could make a valuable contribution to disaster recovery by helping to establish rescue teams, train personnel and develop national legislation in the appropriate countries. Belarus was willing to share its experience in forming rescue teams and providing targeted humanitarian assistance and to provide courses for specialists at the Ministry of Emergency Situations international training institute.

73. OCHA had achieved positive results in the coordination of post-disaster emergency assistance. However, the urgency of disaster prevention required greater international cooperation in areas such as national and regional infrastructure improvement, with the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction playing a central role. While OCHA already played an essential role in mobilizing resources for humanitarian response, it should broaden that resource base to include innovative sources, including the private sector.

74. **Ms. Eckey** (Observer for Norway) took note of the progress made over the past year in reforming and financing the humanitarian system, enlarging the donor base and strengthening the focus on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. On the other hand, as the international community had recently seen in Myanmar, access to life-saving assistance was not a given and respect for humanitarian principles was under constant pressure, as evidenced by the many attacks on United Nations and other humanitarian personnel across the world.

75. Her delegation attached particular importance to the Secretary-General's recommendation for intensified research on the likely humanitarian impact of climate change. His Climate Change Support Team and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change must help Member States improve their understanding of the risks and vulnerabilities involved. Together with the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), Norway would be submitting to the Intergovernmental Panel a revised proposal for a special report on the management of extreme events, which would also shed light on how climate affected existing patterns of human security, vulnerability and risk.

76. Norway welcomed the Secretary-General's establishment of the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis and was looking forward to the presentation of the Comprehensive Framework for Action. The increased humanitarian need for food, nutrition and health services must be met and would require more funding. The structural causes of the food crisis could not be addressed by the humanitarian community alone, but it should work at field level in close cooperation with the national authorities.

77. There should also be closer coordination between the United Nations, Member States and partners to ensure more effective planning and response in the critical "early recovery phase", immediately after a disaster had occurred and before development cooperation commenced. The recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report were important, but more concrete recommendations should have been directed to the United Nations and other partners and his recommendation on gender issues (E/2008/71, para. 64 (j)) should apply also to individual Member States, which ought to report more systematically on how gender-sensitive response measures had affected humanitarian situations on the ground.

78. **Mr. Tarragô** (Brazil) observed that capacity-building was central to a timely and successful response to humanitarian emergencies. First and foremost, it was incumbent on States to provide assistance to people in need in their own territories, supported of course by the impressive system developed within the United Nations often complemented by international aid. The fact that 80 per cent of lives were saved in the first 48 hours after the occurrence of a disaster underlined the importance of building Member States' capacities at all levels, including those of the local authorities and organizations of civil society which were often the first responders. Countries should have the operational, technological and institutional means to minimize the

effects of disasters, and additional resources and transfers of technology should help them build disaster risk reduction preparedness.

79. The recent rise in food prices was a burning issue for it strained the humanitarian response capacity of States and of the United Nations. Capacity-building in that area should follow a twin-track approach combining immediate, short-term relief activities with policies that revitalized agricultural production in developing countries as a way of ensuring sustainable aid efforts, although the long-term solution would hinge on the elimination of the protectionism that plagued small farmers.

80. Regional cooperation was also important. In the Latin American and Caribbean region, a network for providing psychological assistance in disasters and other emergencies had been set up. Generally, neighbouring countries were the first to assist and to bear the impact of emergencies with trans-border effects. One of Brazil's humanitarian initiatives was its system for providing food aid to recipients while favouring environmentally responsible, small-scale farmers, both in Brazil and in the recipient countries. Brazil had also provided technical assistance to many developing countries, based on its own agricultural research. His Government was in the process of adopting a national plan on humanitarian assistance, which would include the creation of a "humanitarian warehouse" that would be able to deliver relief assistance within 48 hours anywhere in Latin America and Africa, and within 72 hours elsewhere in the world.

81. **Mr. Hill** (Observer for Australia) said that the progress made in reforming humanitarian response was positive, particularly from the standpoint of improving coordination. The aim should be to make available a larger number of deployable humanitarian coordinators to support the resident coordinators. In light of the different effects of conflict, disasters and climate change on men and women, the mainstreaming of gender issues into all aspects of humanitarian policy and implementation was essential. Humanitarian response should also address gender-based violence, including the vulnerability of women and girls to opportunistic physical and sexual violence, harassment and intimidation and the need to ensure that women had access to reproductive health services in emergencies.

82. Just as disaster prevention, preparedness and mitigation saved lives, devastation occurred when too little attention was paid to those issues. When disasters occurred, the situation must be analysed to determine what could have been done differently, and action must be taken to ensure that humanitarian response made improvements ("building back better") rather than returning to the pre-disaster situation of high vulnerability. With the frequency and impact of weather-related disasters increasing, the links between climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction should be recognized and strengthened.

83. The increasing violence directed at humanitarian personnel was troubling and must be reversed. Locally recruited staff faced particular risks. Member States should ensure that the safety of all humanitarian workers was paramount and, where appropriate, enshrined in national humanitarian policy and legislation. Unhindered, safe and timely access to populations in need was also vital. Recognizing humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence as fundamental characteristics of humanitarian assistance, his delegation urged Member States and other relevant actors to facilitate such access in complex emergencies and natural disasters. Also in connection with access, his delegation acknowledged the need for transparency and certainty regarding the use of military assets in disaster relief and supported the Guidelines on the Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief (Oslo Guidelines) and the Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies (MCDA Guidelines). There should be further debate on the appropriate and effective use of military assets in disaster response during complex emergencies.

84. **Ms. Blum** (Observer for Colombia) said that humanitarian assistance should be provided in strict adherence to the guiding principles set out in General Assembly resolution 46/182, in particular regarding the neutral and impartial nature of such assistance and the primary role of the affected State in its initiation, organization, coordination and implementation. That issue was of great significance in the case of Colombia, where the Government had assumed responsibility for the coordination and delivery of humanitarian assistance by implementing comprehensive public policies involving the public and private sectors and civil society and developing national plans and

guidelines for disaster prevention and relief. Through its experience with natural and man-made disasters, it had become a model for cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean. It had also responded to humanitarian situations in areas affected by violence and terrorism generated by illegal armed groups. Despite progress in reducing the level of such violence, the implementation of prevention, protection and humanitarian response measures was still a priority. To that end, various legal frameworks, policies and programmes had been implemented under the coordination of her Government.

85. The cooperation of the international community, including the United Nations, was important to complement and support national efforts. Proper coordination between United Nations agencies and other humanitarian actors, and above all, coordination with government agencies was required in order to improve efficiency, coherence, services and coverage and to avoid duplication of effort. The Colombian Presidential Agency for Social Action and International Cooperation had launched an initiative in furtherance of that aim.

86. In light of the emerging humanitarian challenges discussed in the report of the Secretary-General (E/2008/71), her delegation reiterated the importance of strengthening international cooperation and technology transfer for climate change adaptation, developing early warning systems and ensuring disaster preparedness and response. It looked forward to finalization of the framework for action being prepared by the Secretary-General's High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis; concerted efforts by States and the United Nations system would be required in order to implement the short-, medium- and long-term actions needed.

87. Emergency humanitarian assistance must be part of a process that helped rebuild the social fabric of affected communities and ensured sustainability after the crisis. It must therefore be in line with measures to build local capacity and avoid fragmentation in the transition from relief to development. Since national and local capacity-building and coordination with national Governments — including during the transition period — were essential in strengthening States' capacity to fulfil their primary role in humanitarian assistance, future reports should include information on the strategies of United Nations agencies in those areas.

88. **Mr. Yao** Wenlong (China) thanked all those who had provided humanitarian assistance to China following the major earthquake which had struck Sichuan province on 12 May 2008. Given the frequent occurrences of natural disasters, and with armed conflicts, climate change and soaring food prices further exacerbating the global humanitarian situation, the issues dealt with in the report of the Secretary-General were more urgent and important than ever and its conclusions and recommendations called for in-depth consideration.

89. As better coordination was increasingly important in light of the range of actors now involved in humanitarian assistance, the coordination role of OCHA should be strengthened and the resident and humanitarian coordinator system improved through enhanced training and the establishment of a relevant accountability system. Further improvements to the cluster approach, which was contributing to better inter-agency coordination, should be made on the basis of experience. His delegation supported OCHA efforts to strengthen cooperation with local NGOs and the private sector in disaster-stricken areas with the approval of the governments concerned.

90. Given the global shortage of humanitarian relief resources and their uneven distribution, his delegation hoped that the United Nations system would intensify its fund-raising efforts and encourage donors to increase their non-earmarked contributions so that assistance funds could be deployed where they were most needed. The international community should support CERF generously since it strengthened humanitarian response capacity by providing start-up funds for sudden major crises and alleviating funding shortages at the early stages of disaster relief, and his delegation hoped that donors would also respond generously to the flash appeals issued by the United Nations system.

91. His delegation supported United Nations efforts to help disaster-prone countries and regions to strengthen disaster prevention, risk reduction and relief capabilities at all levels. As it was essential to make capacity-building in those areas a key goal of humanitarian assistance, it called on the international community to intensify its support for capacity-building activities at all levels, including by providing assistance with the development of early warning systems and promoting technology transfer.

92. China was confronted annually by the need for disaster prevention, risk reduction and emergency relief activities. It attached great importance to international cooperation in humanitarian assistance and had participated actively in international relief efforts in a number of countries, including, during the past year, Pakistan, Peru, Bolivia, Sudan and Myanmar.

93. **Mr. Ja'afari** (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic) said that while the international community tried to protect individuals from the impact of natural disasters and complex emergencies, its measures were incomplete and selective. Despite international agreements such as the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, civilians paid the heaviest price; the inhabitants of regions suffering armed conflict or foreign occupation faced acts of violence, confiscation of land, forced expulsions and obstacles to humanitarian assistance.

94. The most striking example was that of the occupied Palestinian territory; Israel continued to step up its blockade of the Gaza Strip, depriving its people of their means of subsistence; cutting off water, electricity, food and medicine; and preventing humanitarian organizations from delivering assistance. There had been a major lack of balance in the United Nations response to that situation; the blockade should be condemned by the international community since the Charter of the United Nations did not allow States to violate the rights of civilians, including those living under occupation, and set out the obligations of occupying Powers. The international community, including the Council, had clear responsibilities in that area and should take immediate, concrete steps to implement international humanitarian law in order to achieve the goal of strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations, the subject of the current debate.

95. The situation in the occupied Syrian Golan was similar to that of the occupied Palestinian territory; Israel was seizing land and private property, impeding freedom of movement, taxing agricultural production at punitive rates and making it difficult for the population to live in decent conditions. Its actions were in breach of international law and of its obligations as an occupying Power under United Nations resolutions and the Geneva Conventions.

96. By deliberately preventing access to humanitarian assistance, Israel was jeopardizing the life of civilians. The occupied Syrian Golan should be included in United Nations efforts to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian assistance, especially since the Syrian Arab Republic contributed to CERF. In view of the provisions of Council resolution 2004/50, which called upon States to assist civilians in occupied territories, his delegation urged the international community to put pressure on Israel to meet its commitments under the Geneva Conventions and open the crossing points to allow the passage of humanitarian assistance into the occupied territories.

97. **Ms. Strauss** (Observer for the International Organization for Migration) said that the report of the Secretary-General provided a valuable opportunity to take stock of progress made in developing collaboration and partnership among a broad and growing range of humanitarian actors and to draw lessons concerning new ways of working together in the future.

98. Collaboration and coordination was most relevant to the operational work of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in situations of population displacement. While many organizations were already working together to meet the multifaceted needs of internally displaced persons, the potential of that collaboration was not being fully utilized since the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and the need for unimpeded access to vulnerable populations were ongoing challenges. IOM therefore supported the Secretary-General's call for those issues to be recognized as prerequisites for effective humanitarian response.

99. The usefulness of CERF as a flexible response mechanism, filling the gap between sudden emergencies and the timely availability of cash flows, could not be overstated. The funding that IOM had received from CERF, although somewhat limited, had enabled it to jump-start operations in 49 crises. In light of the strain placed on CERF resources by the food crisis and other complex emergencies, IOM would welcome an increase in contributions to the Fund.

100. On the issue of climate change, IOM was particularly concerned about environmentally induced migration and displacement, a concept that included scenarios ranging from sudden internal or cross-border migration as a result of extreme environmental events to long-term, structural migration patterns in response to progressive environmental change. Such situations

would need to be factored into risk reduction and adaptation strategies at the national, regional and international levels, paying special attention to the different experiences and vulnerabilities of men and women; in situations of forced migration resulting from natural disasters, as in any other crisis or emergency situation, women, girls, boys and men were exposed to different risks and traumas. IOM would be pleased to contribute to the intensified research that the Inter-Agency Standing Committee had identified as needed in order to improve empirical data and analysis and thus to better understand the humanitarian consequences of climate change.

101. **Mr. Laroche** (Observer for the World Health Organization) said that the World Health Organization (WHO) was committed to becoming a credible, predictable and reliable partner in the field of emergency action. In its role as Global Cluster Lead for the Health Cluster, which was working to improve the systematic approach to humanitarian health action and which now needed to be rolled out at the field level, WHO and its health partners had launched 40 per cent more emergency operations in the first six months of 2008 than in the previous two years. In Myanmar, where the Health Cluster was co-led by WHO and the NGO, Merlin, and comprised over 40 agencies, WHO had put in place an early warning system and assisted the Government in carrying out its Post-Nargis Joint Assessment. In China, in addition to relief assistance, WHO had responded to a formal request from the Government to provide psycho-social assistance and reconstruction. The biggest challenge for the Chinese Ministry of Health had been the medical evacuation of tens of thousands of injured people to hospitals across China as the earthquake had rendered many local facilities unsafe, showing the relevance of the WHO, World Bank and International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Hospitals Safe from Disasters Campaign.

102. The issue of climate change called for capacity-building to improve preparedness for response and recovery at the national and community levels. The international community needed to work more effectively with national governments and local authorities since it was those entities, not the United Nations and international NGOs, that were in a position to improve preparedness. WHO was well placed to respond to that challenge. As part of its six-year risk reduction and emergency preparedness strategy, it was working with governments, universities and NGOs to reduce health risks from hazards, including those exacerbated by climate change. An "all-hazards approach" was vital to strengthening the resilience of communities and reducing reliance on external aid. Because less than 5 per cent of all humanitarian funding was currently earmarked for disaster risk reduction and capacity-building, a funding mechanism should be found in order to increase that percentage to 10 to 20 per cent.

103. WHO was very concerned about the health impact of the food crisis, which would result in more severe cases of pneumonia in children, higher death rates among the elderly and less effective treatment for HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. It was working with UNICEF and other agencies to monitor malnutrition trends, provide policy advice and address health and nutrition impacts at the country level.

104. The role of WHO in emergency situations was increasingly recognized, but underfunding for health through the Consolidated Appeals Process and the narrowing flexibility in the use of funds were of major concern. He urged the international community to pay particular attention to the quality and quantity of funding to the health sector.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.

United Nations E/2008/SR.31

Economic and Social Council

Provisional

9 September 2008

Original: English

Substantive session of 2008
Humanitarian affairs segment

Provisional summary record (partial)*of the 31st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 16 July 2008, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Park In-kook (Vice-President) ..... (Republic of Korea)

Contents

Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance (*continued*)

* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting. A panel discussion was conducted.

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08-42459 (E)

In the absence of Mr. Mérorès (Haiti), Mr. Park In-kook (Republic of Korea), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The discussion covered in the summary record began at 10.15 a.m.

Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance (*continued*)

The meeting rose at 10.20 a.m.

A panel discussion on the topic of "Disaster risk reduction and preparedness: Addressing the humanitarian consequences of natural disasters, including the impact of climate change" followed. The panel was chaired by Mr. Park In-kook (Republic of Korea), Vice-President of the Council, and moderated by Ms. Catherine Bragg, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator. The Panellists were Ms. Barbara Carby, Director of Hazard Management, Cayman Islands; Ms. Madeleen Helmer, Head of the Climate Center, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies; Mr. Mostafa Mohaghegh, Head of the Regional Office for West Asia and North Africa, International Strategy for Disaster Reduction; Mr. Phil Bloomer, Campaigns and Policy Director, Oxfam, Great Britain; and Mr. Walter Kaelin, Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons.